IQ11 PHM/SR9-54 (R03)

BRENDAN DONEGAN

(DRAFT MANUSCRIPT)

OF

PHD STUDY

BRENDAN DONEGAN 2010

(Ravi & Thelma)

A response to the thesis of Brendan Donegan on - An Anthropological study of health activism in western India

1. **Factual errors/omissions/inadvertent misrepresentations** (To be introduced into thesis if possible)

There are many in the thesis because it seems narrative has been given preference over documented evidence sometimes. The most important of these for your immediate attention are.

i) P5 - CHC should be CHC/CPHE

ii) P9 – Glossary could include 'Chai' and 'Pohe'

iii) P45 – the so called 'reductionist simplification' is not RN's creation but a reference to a metaphor in the mfc debate in its second anthology – Health Care which way to go (see preface which describes the two schools of thought that were prevalent in the 1970's)

iv) P45 – Dr. N.H. Antia was a 'Surgeon who pioneered plastic surgery in India' not a cardiologist. (see A life of change – The Autobiography of a doctor-Noshir- H Antia, Penguin, 2009)

v) P45 – **"Alternatives approaches to Health Care"** is a monograph of the Indian Council of Medical Research based on a proceeding of a national symposium organized jointly by ICMR and ICSSR in 1976 in India (Pre Alma Ata) and not a committee report. Dr. Antia participated and presented a paper on alternatives to health care system based on the FRCH project in North Alibag and Uran taluks in Maharastra.

vi) P 45- The ICSSR /ICMR report **"Health for All"** an Alternative strategy is not Ramalingaswami 1980 but ICSSR 1981. This is a committee report which had Ramalingaswami has chairman and Dr. Antia as member secretary.

vii) P 45 - In, 1980 there was another ICMR Monograph on **"Evaluation of Primary Health Care Programmes"** in which Dr. Antia, Dr. Banerjee, and Dr. Ravi Narayan linked later to the JSA participated. Over 30 other primary health care innovators from the Community Health Movement, in India also participated.(Ramalingaswami was the DG – ICMR and the main organizer - Did you mean this?)

viii) P 45 - Antia and Banerjee are not just Gandhian and Marxist and or two contrasting starting points for health activist but part of the same emerging body of radical health philosophers in India in the 1970's - perhaps two poles within the same community and inspiration to the health activist and community movement in India from the 1970's. They are like the Yin and Yang of the health movement.

ix) P46 - JP did not say this in this way - specifically but the gist of the advice to the young medico's was something like that. Ramanathan's narrative gave the gist only but there are mfc bulletins which say what JP actually said (clarification only)

x) P45/46 Narayan Ravi (1992)- which is this document? The key document of Community Health Cell which gives a detailed analysis of health care in India – a

situation analysis, a methodological overview of an action, reflection, the description of community health in India, the movement dimension, the principles of community health evolving in the movement and outlining task for the feature is entitled **"Community Health : the search for an alternative process"** – a report of a study-reflection action experiment conducted from Jan 1984 to June 1986 and reported in March 1987 and mimeographed and widely distributed in the Community of Health activists in India.(This was a sabbatical output from a year as academic research visitor at LSHTM, London.) A comparison of your chapter to with this work would have been very interesting since this emerge from a participant observation in the movement during that period

xi) P45 - Banerjee did not just publish 'a number of key sociological studies of health and health care in India', which is an understatement. He provided a new framework for epidemiological, social cultural and political analysis of Health and family planning services in India and the postulates of a new theory and hypothesis (As one of the few health theorists from the global south, you could have given his theory more consideration in your historical overview. You have mentioned the documents but evidently not reviewed them.!

xii) P 52 - The Alma Ata Declaration did not 'identify' but 'reaffirmed' the WHO definition of health of 1948, which you have mentioned.("physical, mental and social well being")

xiii) P 56 the IPHN meeting in Bangalore was in November 1999

Some misrepresentations and or inadequate factual evidence.

xiv) P53 - **IPHN and PHA**:

The link between IPHN and PHA as described in this para is a misrepresentation. To be factually correct drawing from the fact of CHC being involved in both initiatives- the details are as follows: (We have used your paragraph but edited it further.)

At this time, while many groups and networks were involved in the planning of the first Global People's Health Assembly, another short lived civil society network emerged on the global scene, out of a group of civil society organizations and institutions engaging with WHO in policy dialogue between 1997 and 2000. This informal network named the International Poverty and Health Network(IPHN) had a secretariat initially based in WHO and organized meetings in Nairobi, Kenya in 1998 and Bangalore, India in 1999. CHC participated in both these meetings and was an active founding member of IPHN. At the Bangalore, IPHN meeting in November 1999, many invited participants from India and South Asia shared their involvement with the Global People's Health Assembly initiative. The IPHN declaration of Bangalore had many core elements similar to the People's Health Charter and became a precusor to it because of the active involvement of these participants. Apart from this link this meeting also resulted in the involvement of CHC in the PHA organization. Further on the sidelines of this meeting, the early negotiations with the science movement in India which was meeting separately near the venue, was initiated. They were invited to coordinate the preparations and build up in India towards the Global People's Health Assembly. Later at the annual meeting of AIPSN/BGVS in Bhuvaneshwar in Dec 1999 this was further operationalised.

xv) P53/54 - **Origins of JSS/JSA**:

Lakshmanan and Shivanandan's involvement in becoming the key/core persons of AIPSN after this annual meeting, is not a different story but an extension of it. The JSS secretariat was Chennai based with 'Shivanandan' mainly incharge with Lakshmanan from Pondicherry playing a very important near full time role and supported by Ramanathan from Bangalore and Suresh from DSF in Delhi. There are minutes of all these meetings from Jan 2000, throughout that mobilization year which can be used for validation.(it is therefore wrong to say that no official record is available)

P55 Shivanandan had 'less' not little involvement with JSA since 2000 but Ramanathan was an active member and Joint National convenor till April 2003. Since in Jan 2003. In August 2004 the collective decision by JSA in Bhopal to invite CHC to host the PHM Global Secretariat on behalf the Indian PHM and Ramanathan was collectively approved as the coordinator of the Global secretariat, he opted out of the joint convenor of the JSA in its NCC meeting in April 2008, perceiving conflict of interest between his national and global role. Till July 2006 he stayed somewhat ..... from JSA even though CHC/SOCHARA continued to be a active member of the NCC –first with a CHC member as a joint convenor and later as a CHC/SOCHARA representative on NCC.

xvi) P53-57 is impact much do about nothing' Shivanandan and Ramanathan played complementary roles with Shivanandan and colleagues working closely with a certain group of networks and Ramanthan and colleages working with a certain group of networks – 18 of which were brought together by April 2000 when the 5 little books were authored to present this as some sort of conflictual relations between two factions so early in the process – is a total misrepresentations of the phenomenal solidarity and camredere that was actually experienced between both of them, their colleagues and all the networks representatives that led to all that happened in 2000 – the books the meetings at local, district, state, the people health movement from the Kolkatta JSS and the maiden meeting that Shivanandan and Ramanthan are both assertive middle class, elitist backgrounds in only part of the reality of a very positive coordinating relationships between two people representing ..... political poles in the JSA collective

xvii) P 58-60 Network of Networks and .....

There is some confusion in this section of the thesis from the 'narratives' and from the apparent evidence collected from various sources. Table-1, and 2 show the growth of the network of networks and other using two well documented sources to explain diversity and growth . Two clarifications are also offered for the CHC/SOCHARA dichotomy that features in the text and for the concept of resource organizations included in the NCC as it evolved from JSA to JSA

May 2000 (NCC of JSS)

Health Networks	Women's Networks	Others
ALDAN	AIDWA	AIPSN
ACHAN	AIWC	BGVS
CHAI	JWP	FORCES
CMAI	NFIW	NAPM
FMRAI	NAWO	RK

MFC		
SOCHARA		
VHAI		

Source : JSS Booklet 3- Mding life worth live

Jan 2004 (NCC of JSS)

Health Networks	Women's Networks	Others	Resource Centres
ALDAN	AIDWA	AIPSN	JNU
ACHAN	JWP	AID	CEHAT
BPNI	NFIW	BGVS	CHC
CHAI	NAWO	FORCES	
CMAI		NAPM	
FMRAI		RK	
MFC			
VHAI			

Source : The Peoples Health Source Book, Jan 2004

XIX Three changes of status /nomenclature

i) In JSS : In 2000 SOCHARA was included as a network. Since SOCHARA was a network of CH areas had professionals distributed over many states in …….. Later as JSA evolved and a group of resource centres were introduced in the NCC, CHC the functional unit of SOCHARA was included /mentoring in the listing of organizations along with CEHAT and CSMCH of JNU these being somewhat similar in their typology and contribute. In JSA –CHC /SOCHARA are often used interchangeable since we are both network/resource centre.

ii) AIWC which was part of JSS officially dropped out and RK, VHAI and NAPM have been nationally /or peripherally involve.

iii) In JSA – the new entrants as full NCC member are BPNI, AID, CEHAT, CSMCH of JNU who have participated in JSS as well but played an increasingly active role since JSA was for a There is no discrepancy or agenda in the changes or additions/deletions even though narratives may be 'more or less informal.

2. Methodological Issues:
We find three major challenges that have not been either addressed or adequately clarified

a) The first is the issue of the methodology applied to hide the identity of your informants
You have used the 'change of name' as method but this makes no sense whatsoever when your changed name is described with organization and designation included. What are you hiding or protecting?
You have also used this some what anarchically sometimes mentioning names some times their pseudonyms. I for one would not hesitate to let you name me knowing full well that may narrative in my own –affected by my understanding, experience and of late memory itself (RN) and I believe that I have established enough trust and credibility across the diversities you have described to be held responsible for what I have said or not said other may take different and more cautious or nuanced positions. How are you deciding in each case? It is onething sending a letter exploring how to manage the implications and to attempt to arrive at a consenses in methodology. We appreciate your effort in this ,

however as you have your observed the ethical implications will become more important only when something is written. Now is the time from the reactions/responses of some of the others, I feel a range of challenges from feeling personally hurt to a feeling of being misrepresented to a feeling of even being ignored. We think while your immediate thesis sent for the defence may lack clarity on this aspect it becomes a very significant challenge when you begin to share the findings and the analysis more broadly keeping in context your own stated cautions/commitments about why study /why disseminate.

b) Your methodology chapter

This is more about dilemmas and challenges rather then dynamics and research framework. Even in ethnography focusing on narratives there is reason to evolve some validation, methodology to ensure that you build your narrative on evidence even if conflicting that can be verified by some means like archival/documentation or by checking consistency, validity, transferability etc. In my earlier section I have taken orgins and participatory network and shown some proactive direction to express this clarity.

i) How you proposed to do this is not at all clear.

ii) Also if you compare your thesis as it stands today with the research proposal included in the appendix then you seem to have tackled only question 3 and not addressed 1,2 and 4-6.

iii) If you have mentioned also 5 social groups but from the thesis the focus is only on one – members of the three types of organizations that you have mentioned in the comments of activists- ……., left groups and right based ngo's

iv) Another aspect in methodology is that you have mixed up (not easy when you are analyzing tree flowering narratives) with the research questions shifting from one to the other in both level and focus your analysis of …. CEHAT relations, relation of CEHAT to other JSA members; JAA and CEHAT with national JSA; and even sometimes national JSA with international PHM using bits and pieces of narratives interchangeably to explain trends, tendencies and processes at different levels. Perhaps this is the challenge of ethnographic evidence

v) That is why it seems to many to be less ethnography and more journalistic gossip even if only inadvertently

vi) I think by rearranging your comments and discussions around different issues and levels a bit more carefully this apparent confusion and sense of anarchy can be diminished. In that sense your thesis does seem not yet in its final stages but getting there – sometimes not clear where!

vii) Finally by using a western India cluster of activists and extrapolating from Maharastra evidence conclusions about JSA nationally is problematic. Even with the help of national level informant evidence you have shown an ambitious tendency to draw more than is called for. If I try to analayse Karnataka and Tamilnadu experience with Maharastra there are many differences and hence the national is both a composite of different state experiences of JSA apart from being a 'negotiation' between the diverse elements within the NCC. While we see the need to locate the local/state level in the context of national and international – your need to ensure a rigour of narratives at all levels is to ensure that you can make these generalizations.

viii) Overall by locating all your ethnographic evidence to narratives three key representatives makes – Sadhu, Shivananda and Raghunadhan with occasional doser from Rayar, Vishwanath and Ameyas, if you fallen into the trap both of patricahy and reductionism. The national JSA is the outcome of the wide diversity of forces/networks/organizations represented in the NCC whose narratives would be very different. Also by totally ignoring the many women activists who play important leadership roles as well in JSA and involving women activists only to share against or supportive evidence- a very important

dimension of the JSA architecture has been ignored. This is apart from any support in study methodologies from feminist research experience which is totally absent. This reductionist tendency is also when you try to explore engagement in NRHM and the debates. Tension surroundes it when over 20 members of JSA are linked to different aspects of NRHM ..... state level action groups etc.

ix) You have used a lot of terminologies or carried new ones that are both somewhat pejorative or in the language of work. Parasitic voluntarism – by your own definition on voluntarism is parastic because even sanghatan volunteers need support from family and friends and other sources. So the paid work of ngos does not become more parasitic than others. We feel the term perhaps could be dependent voluntarism since parasitic means always a negative context war zone, bull dozed, capture and many others add a sort of zest sensastionalism and unnecessary energy to what should be a more balanced relatively objective analysis. Perhaps it shows a youthful regiour to analysis the evidence within the politics of confrontations rather than the politics of engagement. Had these been in the narratives, they would have a different significance. But since they are mostly in your analysis they reflect your effort to add zing into the thesis at some cost of objectivity or a more empathic explanations.

(Sundararaman)

Dear Brendan Donegan,

I finally did get around to reading your thesis. What you meant when you told us that you were studying JSA and what I and I suppose a number of my "ambushed" friends, understood by it were worlds apart. I would broadly agree with all the comments that Abhay Shukla and Anant Phadke and Vandana Prasad and Manisha have sent to you. Abhay and Anant point out a sample of factual inaccuracies, all of which I agree with. To this, I would add that there are two more types of inaccuracies- one that comes from the use of conjecture to fill in information gaps, and another because you include your version of reasons and interpretations, seamlessly mixed with our quotations and reasons and interpretations- thus implicitly attributing to us views and motives that we would be much rather distanced from. It would be far too laborious for me to point out all of these- and I am not sure whether there is much point. After all even all our versions of what is a hard fact could be, in your technique, substituted by another version on the grounds that even a single players view- however marginal his or her role- had such an alternative version of the fact to offer.

Let me offer you another game analogy – to your Scrabble playing idiom. Imagine then a description of a foot-ball tournament- without any reference to the purpose- scoring goals, winning matches- or without any reference to the other teams- either the competing team in that match, or the other teams on the tournament- and without any reference to the audience – within the stadium or outside. The sole focus of description is how players jostle for their position in the team- whether they are played as centre-forwards , or half- backs, or full backs or the captain, or have to sit on the bench. Reference to goals, and the interaction with other teams occur – but only a backdrop to its implication on the positioning of different players. No doubt every football team has such dynamics, and knowing this dynamic may even help a coach manage his team better. But could this description, be called an understanding of the game, or even help define strategy, or how to score more goals and win the match. Football teams squabble in the dressing room, but pull together on the field. But in your description of the game, scoring goals and winning matches becomes a means to altering the position from which a particular member plays and advancing the dressing room squabble, and there is even implicit denial of any collective celebration or feeling of loss or any strategy of cooperation between the members of the team!!! In your version of football, there is no team at all, only jostling, competing individuals. This is the version of the game and match that you invite us to join you in the description of. And I am aware of a view that it is not for us to judge or censor, since in this game only " peers " are qualified to do so and since the rest of us are trapped in the dichotomy of being government or being civil society and thereby get excluded from being peers- it would not even be relevant. So I do not judge the thesis, much less attempt to censor it. And I do not labour to describe further to you – all that you have *not* covered- the goals of JSA, the degree of success and limitations it has had in setting up a public discourse on health rights, the role it has played in shaping NRHM and health policy, the fights it has had with persons and institutions hostile to the shared objectives of JSA and health equity and so on. I take it now, that these were not the object of your study and I take your invitation seriously "to view it as a partial interpretation shaped by the exigencies of the fieldwork encounter and by my sense of what it was appropriate for me to write" and follow you down your path.

But let me express my surprise, that having taken the invitation to walk along with you and see you your version of the game as an endless jostling for positioning, you could get even the description of that dimension so completely off the mark. I am afraid, Brendan, that this description of the

struggle between Abhay and me for having the leadership position within the JSA- is simply not true and quite a bit absurd and bizarre. While I have always differed on a number of issues and positions from Anant and Abhay, and continue to do so, much of my own understanding has developed because of the very productive nature of this dialogue- and some of my best time in life has been spent in argument with them. I never do lose an opportunity to invite them to a whole lot of government consultations and meetings that I hold in my SHSRC/NHSRC capacity, simply because it is so useful to have their point of view expressed. And SATHI-CEHAT and every member on their team, have also shown the same spirit in their interaction with me. I get innumerable requests for my presence in a number of meetings they hold and am able to attend only a few of them- but even that is quite a lot and not quite consistent with your understanding of us as competitors for a finite space. My official designation and my informal position and influence within JSA has not changed from year 2000 to now- though the time I am able to spend on it has changed, due to changing priorities on my time, and this has had so little to do with Abhay. The status I have in my paid employment and the emoluments I take home is about the same as I would have had, if I had continued in the paid position I was in, in the year 2000. If anything, I would have been a bit better off . Not once or twice, but repeatedly the leadership of SATHI-Cehat have been persuading me to increase my time and role in JSA. If I had spent more time and gained more visibility, it would hardly have displaced Abhay or Anant.

That is not to deny that there is no jostling for positioning that goes on- but Brendan- *this* is not it. There were many real issues and contests on positioning - but you have largely missed all of that. Let me place on record, that the arguments between Abhay and myself over the positions we take on issues do NOT reflect any wrangles for positioning of ourselves, vis a vis each other- and this whole climax you build up of JSA dynamics as represented by the struggle between the two of us- is in the realm of fiction- pure and simple.

Since fiction was not your intention, I wonder how you got to it. Perhaps, Brendan, if you had told us frankly, that this was what you were interested in looking at, we could have helped, get you a better description of these dimensions also. But your method seems to have locked you into discussing and appearing to discuss only about the goals, while all the while, almost surreptitiously, you were seeking to describe altogether another dynamic. Or maybe you did tell us and we did not listen. The time I personally gave you was so little, that I am quite amazed that you made so much of it, and being perhaps forced to bridge information gaps by conjecture, you arrive at a description so tangential to reality. (The usual literary device on such semi-biographical accounts is to put a cautionary note saying that there is no connection with people dead or alive, and any such appearance is purely coincidental).

But then I confess, in fairness to you, that if you had told us that this was your real interest, we may never have allowed you into our meetings and homes. SATHI has really done so much to host and support you. Why would we? When we invite a guest home for a feast – we do not really expect them to be leering at our ass(apropos your poignant opening sentence for the entire book- the more the monkey climbs the tree, the more you see of its ass). And then getting even that wrong!!! And, oh, the sadness of it all. Look at how much could have been written, how much need there was for documenting and assessing the work of the JSA. With so much time and effort and expense that not only you, but also SATHI, spent on this study, how much could have been done! If only the focus had been on the feast instead. If only...

You know, Brendan, in my family, we play a lot of Scrabble. Scrabble in our family and in our friend circle is a rather fun game. It is a time of bonding- the game itself is only an adjunct. Players lean across the board to help each other.(we have a rule variation that if anyone gets stuck with a Q without an U an exchange is allowed.) There is much laughter, coffee gets served, the room is warm and there is a feeling of closeness. I do not recognise this cold calculating game of Scrabble, that you describe. Even in fiction there are genres that are love-less, devoid of passion and purpose. And such genres of fiction do command their own audience, even occasionally win the Nobel- but I would not buy the book.

T. Sundararaman.

(ABHAY)

Gmail

Ravi Narayan <chcravi@gmail.com>

Re: Draft of PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

Abhay Shukla <abhayseema@vsnl.com> **Mon, Nov 29, 2010 at 6:32 PM**
To: Brendan Donegan <brendan_zappa@yahoo.com>, ekbalb@gmail.com, ctddsf@vsnl.com, guhaamitava_@hotmail.com, ajaykharebpl2003@yahoo.co.in, vakkan2000@yahoo.com, thelma.narayan@gmail.com, subharakhal@gmail.com, premdas@sochara.org, sama.womenshealth@gmail.com, narendra531@rediffmail.com, renukhanna@gmail.com, sundararaman.t@gmail.com, chaukhat@yahoo.com, mshiva@phmovement.org, mirashiva@yahoo.com, imrana@mail.jnu.ac.in, sudipta@popfound.org, mohanrao2008@gmail.com
Cc: dhananjay.kakde@gmail.com, arogyasathi@rediffmail.com, chandrima_bchatterjee@yahoo.com, leni_chaudhuri@hotmail.com, rduggal57@gmail.com, cehatindore@rediffmail.com, lakshmi.lingam@gmail.com, masumfp@vsnl.com, anant.phadke@gmail.com, jsagade@yahoo.com, sant@sathicehat.org, samrat.shirvalkar@gmail.com, renuka301@yahoo.com, dhwani.katagade@gmail.com, abhijitdas@chsj.org, sahajbrc@youtele.com, ampitre@yahoo.com, nilanginaren@gmail.com, 21.sangeeta@gmail.com, tathapi@tathapi.org, sunita@chsj.org, indira.chakravarthi@yahoo.co.in, nhpp@airtelmail.in, usrn_schoolhealth@yahoo.com, amulyabhai@gmail.com, devika_biswas@yahoo.co.in, manishagupte@gmail.com, dasgupta_jnu@yahoo.com, ravi@phmovement.org, chcravi@gmail.com, weareraman@gmail.com, popfound@sify.com, radhahb@yahoo.com, csathyamala@gmail.com, brianlobo6@gmail.com, drvvinay@gmail.com

Dear Brendan,

Thanks for your thesis which you have been working on since at least a year, but you have given all of us just a few days to comment upon a nearly 150 page draft.
I must commend you on the number of gross and other factual errors, misrepresentations, misinterpretations, selective quotations and selective interpretations, fallacious generalisations which you have managed to compress into less than 150 pages. This must have required a lot of effort.
Given the limited time available and one's preoccupation with various things, it is impossible to respond to all the ideas you have presented, yet I have tried to put down some initial thoughts in the attached file. I am planning to send this to Prof. David Mosse at dm21@soas.ac.uk, I hope this would be OK since I understand he is your main guide.

Sincerely,
Abhay

On Wed, Nov 24, 2010 at 4:25 PM, Brendan Donegan <brendan_zappa@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear all,

I am writing to invite comments and feedback on the draft of my PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan which is attached to this email. I have submitted this draft to my supervisor, and when he gives me his comments on it I will respond to these and submit the thesis for examination on 15 December. After that I will have an oral viva exam at some point in early 2011, with three possible outcomes: pass, fail, or corrections. If and when I pass the viva, my thesis will be stored in the University of London archives and will be accessible to anyone who visits those archives. At some point in the future I may publish revised versions of some or all of the thesis, either in articles, book chapters in edited collections, or as a monograph. Before publishing I will circulate what I have written and request your comments and feedback.

If you wish to send comments or feedback you are most welcome to do so. Given the tight timeframe I would ask that if you have any comments or feedback please let me know as soon as possible.

Best wishes
Brendan

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Response to Brendan1.doc
76K

Dear Brendan,

I have quickly gone through some of the chapters of your thesis, and am undergoing a complete self-revelation as a result. Since I am traveling frequently in this period, I am not in a position to respond to the many, many issues which could be mentioned, and would only mention some points which immediately come to mind. I would like to acknowledge that due to your research, my understanding of SATHI, JAA, JSA and myself is getting totally transformed. Thanks to your thesis I have realized that SATHI is nothing more than a power-hungry, parasitic and opportunistic NGO lacking any positive contribution to the health movement in Maharashtra or India, which works with the primary purpose of dominating networks and silences its opponents within JAA (p.99). The entire history of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Jan Arogya Abhiyan and the Right to health care campaign has now been revealed to me as nothing more than a crude power struggle between certain ambitious leaders carried out purely for 'material gains' (p.98) in a 'warzone' full of 'battlefields' (p. 98).

In fact I realized that my understanding of 'truth' has been flawed, since you seem to have a different and apparently superior version of facts compared to what I, or probably any of us here are familiar with. Perhaps your vision from London gives you better access to facts about SATHI and JSA which we ordinary health activists lack here while working in India. For example although ***the entire Right to healthcare campaign within Maharashtra in 2003-04 was carried out on a voluntary basis by the JAA network*** – including organizing six Jan sunwais in various parts of Maharashtra and a survey of 144 PHCs across the state – according to you SATHI was receiving funds from NHRC for this! Contrary to your assertions **not a single paisa of funds for campaign activities within any of the states was either expected by JSA or given by NHRC.** The Commission only paid logistic expenses for organizing the one-day public hearing events (some travel, hall and food expenses), and for logistic reasons these funds were received by SAMA on behalf of JSA (as decided collectively in JSA) through a special account in Delhi. Although this history was probably told to you, and even if not you could have easily ascertained this by asking any of us, you deliberately chose to ignore these facts and replaced them by your rather twisted version of 'truth' to bolster your pet hypothesis, which I will continue to refer to. Thanks to your thesis, I now understand that SATHI had no positive role in organizing the RTHC campaign in Maharashtra in 2003-04, it offered nothing to grassroots activists, it had no organizational role or initiative, the only reason people associated the campaign with SATHI is because they got (totally non-existent) funds for the campaign through SATHI (p.69) according to your version of 'truth'.

In case you have any regard for facts, replace your fabrication with the key fact that no organisation in JAA got funds from NHRC through SATHI or otherwise, and then see how well your hypothesis "*In Maharashtra, this campaign was often understood to be a project of the NGO SATHI because funding for the campaign in the state was routed through SATHI*" (p. 69) stands up to scrutiny.

I also realized that (according to your interpretation, not mine) SATHI became the '*de facto* leader of JSA', mainly because of ***the conditions that working with NHRC imposed on JSA***! (p. 94) – no mention of any initiative, organisational inputs or knowledge based contribution by SATHI to the campaign! Another highly selective misinterpretation of facts which I suppose we should accept as 'truth'! You mention next that *'The NHRC wanted a set of activities across the country that would meet a tight set of deadlines, and* ***to achieve this*** *the JSA set up a Secretariat'*. Also that – "*SATHI agreed to host the National Secretariat of JSA that would*

ensure JSA met the terms of the agreement with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)" (p. 108). What a brilliant subversion of facts to suit your own logic! If you had cared for facts half as much as your pet opinions, you would have known that the national secretariat was taken up by SATHI in collaboration with two Delhi based JSA national organisers, when this was discussed and decided by the National Coordination Committee of JSA in its national meeting ***in April 2003, long before JSA had any interaction with NHRC***. The SATHI team (then part of CEHAT) then took certain lead in developing the RTHC campaign from mid-2003 onwards, and played an active role in organising a national public consultation in Mumbai in Sept. 2003 – where the role of NHRC was that its Chairperson attended the programme for a few hours and expressed broad endorsement of the concept of Right to health (no question of any conditions or funds from them!). The SATHI team continued to take initiative at various levels, collaborated for development of tools and formats, and helped to develop the campaign in Maharashtra, and at national level, *without any direct collaboration with NHRC over a year* ***from mid-2003 to mid-2004*** (incidentally also without any funding from any source, including NHRC). This included initiating public hearings within Maharashtra which were organised on a voluntary basis by various JAA constituent organisations. The idea of a series of public hearings with NHRC was suggested and lobbied for by JSA (not dictated by NHRC as per your interpretation) and started only in July 2004 and continued till December 2004 – with a schedule that was jointly worked out by JSA and NHRC. Only logistic funds were provided for the actual day-long hearings (taken by JSA through SAMA which was collectively decided in JSA, mentioned above).

But according to your totally inverted narrative (a) ***JSA set up its secretariat to meet NHRC deadlines!*** and (b) whatever lead SATHI took in the RTHC campaign (period 2003-04) had nothing to do with the SATHI team's initiative but was because of the ***conditions that NHRC imposed on JSA!***

Nothing could be more insulting and denigratory to entire JSA as a national campaign coalition, as well as being factually completely wrong, but I suppose we should all now read history upside down, and JSA should bow down to your version of 'truth'.

I also realised that the narrative of one particular person, who has not been active in JAA since several years now – Audrey – has been privileged as an informant and has been elevated above all others active in JAA for reasons best known to you. A large number of statements and assertions by this person have been presented again and again – without offering any counter interpretations – which is clearly a form of endorsement by you. For example, in uncritically presenting her sweeping and highly damaging statement – "It was our campaign, now it's their project" (p. 95) – clearly referring to the RTHC campaign - you have not even attempted to interrogate – *did anyone actually have a project for carrying out RTHC campaign activities*? In 2003-04, for the main period of the RTHC campaign and public hearings, ***the SATHI team had no specific project for this work***, and its members carried out all of their own usual project activities and then considerably stretched themselves beyond their usual capacities to carry out the wide range of RTHC activities. (Similarly, to the best of my knowledge, no organisation in JSA across the country was involved in the Right to health campaign in 2003-04 *as a funded project activity*). As mentioned, the limited funds given by NHRC to JSA through SAMA were only for the logistic expenses of the one-day public hearings – and incidentally even this amount was not fully spent, a significant amount being returned as unspent to NHRC. So since you endorse and present the statement - "It was our campaign, now it's their project" – you have a responsibility of specifying, aside from the purely event related funds taken collectively from NHRC by JSA for regional hearings, ***who had the 'project' to carry out the Right to health care***

campaign? If you fail to do so, you should clearly state that this statement is absolutely baseless and is without any factual foundation, being based on one particular individual's speculative interpretation.

I also underwent a complete revelation when I realised from you that the reason for the SATHI team to undertake ASHA training in Maharashtra was *to obtain funds from the government to pay staff salaries!* (*'SATHI and many of the other NGOs in JSA had people in their employ and needed to pay salaries, and several programmes of NRHM offered attractive opportunities for NGOs to take on implementation' – p.123*). I would have felt carried away by your eloquent analysis – except for the very minor factual problem that *SATHI never asked for, or received a single paisa from NRHM for salaries related to ASHA training in Maharashtra.* The funds received from NRHM were limited to the logistics of State training of trainers, and the actual ASHA training camps in various blocks carried out by partner organisations. You could have verified this by asking us during your two years spent in India, but you preferred to ignore facts and replace them with your more sensational version of truth, to promote your pet hypothesis. If you had paid a little more attention to the actual history of the SATHI team, and had been a little less carried away by your negativistic hypothesis, you would have understood *why the SATHI team got involved in ASHA training in Maharashtra* even though there was no direct financial gain from the government, and only limited logistics expenses were being given – by looking at our entire history of Community health worker training since 1998, and our interest in developing and generalizing this work within the framework of the public health system. But I am not interested in going into this now, since given your perspective it would probably be impossible for you to understand that people in the health movement can act with any motives other than 'material gain'.

Your analysis of the Right to health care campaign is also full of so many errors and distortions that it is difficult to figure out what you actually ever understood about this campaign, and it is an example of how all positive aspects of the health movement has been blocked out by your highly selective analysis. I will here just point out some of your formulations that are clearly at variance with facts. Firstly you allege, as usual without substantive evidence, that the RTHC campaign was a climb down from 'politics of engagement with the oppressed' to 'politics focused on engagement with the state', and that the less struggle oriented groups in JSA were the driving force or inducement for this shift:

"The RTHC campaign involved a shift from a politics focused on engagement with the oppressed to a politics focused on engagement with the state. Why this shift? Why choose to work with the NHRC at all if doing so requires this re-orientation? An answer can be found if we turn to the question of the diversity of JSA's membership. While many core members of JSA very obviously self-define as being 'of the left' and are enthusiastic about struggle-based politics, many others are not willing to involve their organisations and networks in struggle-based politics." (p. 109)

From this analysis one would gather that in the period before the RTHC campaign was launched, JSA was involved in a major way in '*engagement with the oppressed'* and the RTHC campaign detracted from and diluted such struggles and led to a more tame '*engagement with the state'*. In fact the situation was the exact opposite of your analysis. In the year or so before the RTHC campaign – late 2002 and early 2003 – JSA was at a low ebb, with hardly any nationally coordinated campaigns or organised grassroots mobilisation, and the unresponsive BJP government at national level appearing as an oppressive obstacle. In contrast, from September

2003 and especially in 2004 during the peak of the campaign, I can state definitely about Maharashtra that JSA member organisations significantly reached out to many communities, documented dozens of cases of denial of health care and mobilized for local Jan sunwais in several areas (six such sunwais were organised in Maharashtra alone in 2004). In my knowledge similar mobilizations took place in certain other places too – for example Jan sunwais organised by JSA associated organisations in the same period in Bangalore city (on health issues of urban poor), in Barwani district of MP and in Dahod district of Gujarat (this is not an exhaustive list). In your very limited understanding, even Jan Sunwais in the RTHC campaign - assertive and demand oriented mass events based on peoples mobilization, where people present their issues in presence of officials is '*engagement with the state'* which by your binary definition have nothing to do with '*engagement with the oppressed'*. Your resultant blinkered analysis prevents you from seeing the fact that the RTHC campaign in fact enhanced JSA organisations' engagement with people in oppressed communities in many areas.

Another implication of your statement above is that the RTHC campaign was most attractive to the less militant organisations within JSA, in fact according to you the campaign seems to have been launched to cater to them. The facts as usual, stand totally opposite to your biased contentions, since several, among the largest Jan sunwais during the RTHC campaign were organised actively by Sangathans (people's organisations) such as Adivasi Mukti Sangathan and Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan (two Jan Sunwais in Barwani in September 2003), Kashtakari Sanghatana and Shramik Mukti Sanghatana (Jan sunwai at Mokhada, Jan. 2004) and Narmada Bachao Andolan (Jan Sunwai at Nandurbar in May 2004). Does not sound to me exactly like a list of groups '*not willing to involve their organisations and networks in struggle-based politics'*. Of course you can inform all of us as to who were the 'non-militant' organisations who became specifically very active in the RTHC campaign – I am personally not aware of any and I doubt if others in JSA are either. As usual, facts are at loggerheads with Brendan's analysis.

You further state that:
"Structuring the campaign around the NHRC hearings meant that "the campaign became 'this one case in this one village, this one case in this other village', with no examination of the broader context; that one case is not all that is happening in that village"(p. 109)

As usual you have twisted or ignored facts, to suit your hypothesis. You should be aware that a large part of the RTHC campaign was about *documenting structural denial of health rights* – through surveys of Primary health centres, Community health centres, surveys of Village health services etc. The booklet on documentation of denial of health care published by JSA with collective contributions from many (you must have seen this booklet) lays out the detailed formats for activists to survey all these services. The clear and definite intention was to *document and challenge the larger context of weakened, poorly functional public health facilities.* In Maharashtra, JAA member organisations voluntarily surveyed 144 PHCs and 19 Rural hospitals in 2003-04 based on these formats and prepared a detailed report, the findings of which were presented to NHRC in the Bhopal public hearing in July 2004, as a *substantiation that the problem was not just of individual cases but was of a broader structural nature*. Of course, since all your quotations and all your wisdom about JAA and JSA come from only one or two negative sources, such minor details must have escaped your attention or would appear irrelevant to you.

I also realized from your thesis that the entire involvement of all leading activists in JSA, including myself, has been driven by power-hungry, manipulative and dominative motivations.

Is attributing motives to persons without presenting any evidence a principle of anthropological research methodology? Until now I had the conception that there is a slight difference between gossip and research, but your thesis has relieved me of this misconception. The entire debate within JSA has been analysed by you as being purely to dominate the network for *material gains* (p. 98) – including so many debates on different issues including Nandigram etc. - no possibility of genuine differences of ideology or methods of work of course. Your sweeping conclusions about debates in JAA / JSA are – "*both these groups mobilise their narratives in the struggle for dominance within the field of social action because there are material gains at stake"* (p. 98) – besides exaggerating the contradictions and presenting them as a 'struggle for dominance', you have not given any evidence for the motives you impute, nor have you pointed out what were the '*material gains at stake"*?

From your thesis I similarly realize that all the hard work and efforts involved in organisation of the RTHC campaign, and the launching the PRHW and Community monitoring plus were orchestrated by myself (rather than being collective decisions and efforts of JSA), done with the sole purpose of capturing the JSA leadership:

"*With the support of SATHI-CEHAT, a small organisation of paid full-time NGO professionals, he developed a proposal for how JSA could take up this model with support from the National Human Rights Commission, the Right to Healthcare Campaign was launched, and Sudhir (i.e. Abhay) was propelled into the centre of the leadership of JSA. Encouraging JSA to adopt a confrontational approach to the UPA through the People's Rural Health Watch and community monitoring plus would maintain continuity with what JSA had previously done and the positions they had taken, but would also build on what he himself had previously done* ***and thereby ensure he continued to be positioned in the centre of JSA****." (p. 122) (emphasis added)*

I am flattered by the motivations that you have attributed to me (the line between gossip and research seems thin indeed), and it's a case of 'damned if you do, damned if you don't'. If someone encourages JSA to take a confrontational approach to UPA, that is purely driven by lust for power; if someone encourages engagement with the state, then that is obviously a sell-out. Catch-22. You of course fail to mention that PRHW was anchored in CMAI in Delhi, and was implemented in various northern states and not Maharashtra – yet still somehow all this was being done so that '*I would be positioned at centre of JSA*'. Leave alone the implications for me. don't you think this is pretty insulting to the intelligence and commitment of all the people in JSA who were in the forefront of all these activities? I suppose all of us should give up health activism, where each and everything you do, every campaign and activity, can be attributed to negative personal motives. Instead maybe we should all become academics in the University of London - that alone might protect us from such 'analyses' and would give us the license us to freely offload our personal judgments onto others.

Sundararaman has been tarred with a similar brush:

"Encouraging JSA to adopt a supporting role to the UPA would involve JSA moving away from the critical watchdog role they had started to build for themselves through the Right to Healthcare Campaign, but might have led JSA to take a role more complementary to how he was positioned so that JSA could contribute to his efforts to make the most of the window of opportunity presented by the UPA. If JSA accepted this position, Lakshmanan (i.e.

Sundararaman) would once more be positioned at the centre of JSA, possibly (although not necessarily) displacing Sudhir (i.e. Abhay)." (p.122-123)

It is interesting that here suddenly and conveniently, in order to provide contrast with Sundar's position, the Right to Healthcare campaign becomes 'a critical watchdog role' by JSA (just a few pages earlier hadn't we learnt that the campaign was a climb down from 'engagement with oppressed' to tame 'engagement with the state'?). Sundar, like myself, appears in your narrative as a power-hungry manipulator, pushing certain views just in order to 'position himself at the centre of JSA' and to displace Abhay. I am not sure what Sundar makes of this, but for me while the *differences and debates on issues and strategies regarding NRHM have been real*, this purported no-holds-barred personal struggle for power between myself and Sundar to be 'at the centre of JSA' is a bit of a revelation.

Thanks, Brendan. After over two years of interaction, this is all that you have understood about me, Sundar and other leading activists in JSA. Of course there is no need to present a shred of evidence while making such sweeping and extremely damaging personal allegations – the researcher's opinion is enough.

Your compulsion to fit all facts into your pet hypotheses leads you to make absurd statements like the following –

'it is possible to see this 'struggle' between the female foeticide and violence against women agendas in terms of a struggle between the non-AIPSN faction and AIPSN factions in JSA' (footnote 65, p.91)

Such statements show how little you have understood, or cared to understand of JSA. Here you have constructed a non-existent struggle out of thin air – you obviously have not cared to note that it was AIPSN organisations which organised the first national workshop within JSA to critique sex-selective abortions, and that several non-AIPSN organisations in JSA including CEHAT (Mumbai) and MASUM have been consistently working on the issue of violence against women since many years. But I forget, facts are irrelevant, they must be ignored to suit your overarching intellectual hypotheses.

While you classify BGVS as a 'movement' (I plan to write about this separately, some time later), what about those few organisations which have painstakingly partnered and worked with grassroots people's organisations on health rights issues for over a decade, and have collaborated with sanghatanas to mobilise scores and scores of people's actions around health rights – do these organisations have no contribution to your version of 'movement'? I am sure you have visited Barwani (which comes in Western India, the area covered by your thesis), but am not so sure whether you have understood what is going on there through collaboration of JADS and the small SATHI team – which I would claim is one of the best examples of developing mass initiative and a grassroots movement on health issues. Similarly, despite your apparent concern for 'engagement with the oppressed', in your nearly 150 pages you have chosen not to talk about SATHI's partnership with people's organisations like Shramik Mukti Dal and Kashtakari Sanghatana which has been forged and continued over more than a decade, to promote a wide range of health rights processes and people's actions. But I forget, such positive processes are completely irrelevant for you since they do not fit into your hypothesis.

Unlike you, whose job is largely to intellectually dissect the work done by others, I am unfortunately involved in several practical activities, imperfect as they may be, and I frankly do not have either the time or inclination to point out all your factual mistakes, biased interpretations, selectively negative interpretations and sweeping (hence flawed) generalisations. If we start putting together all your factual mistakes (there are many more beyond those I could mention here) and biased, one-sided interpretations, ***your entire narrative would fall apart***. A slightly more objective analysis of JSA would have revealed to you both the positive and negative aspects of this activity. Of course there are many contradictions and problems in JSA and in the health movement in India, as there are in any movement anywhere. But nowhere in the roughly 150 pages of your draft have you cared to talk about the positive aspects and community involvement and mobilizations in various health rights activities, in the Right to health care campaign, in Community based monitoring, and in various other activities done by the health movement in Maharashtra or India. Many people – not only in SATHI but also in Kashtakari Sanghatana and in many other organisations belonging to JAA and JSA and working at the ground level – would have told you about the positive processes and impacts of health activism and community mobilization around health that has been developed in their areas of work. If you had cared to understand, you would have seen that not due to any single organisation, but due to sustained and combined efforts by various organisations working in collaboration in the health movement in Maharashtra over a decade or so, in several blocks and districts *the power balance between grassroots activists and community members on one hand, and health officials on the other hand has changed in favour of ordinary people in a definite and significant manner*, and this has been accompanied by accountability as well as often small but concrete gains in form of specific improvements in delivery of health services – but you have deliberately chosen to completely ignore this. You have also failed to understand that looking at the larger picture, actually the vast majority of NGOs in Maharashtra and India *have generally chosen not to take a definite rights based approach – and hence have never faced the struggles, conflicts and risks that are faced by the relatively few NGOs taking up rights based work.* The continued stresses and ongoing conflicts that such organisations face while confronting the system – especially during Jan sunwais, State level conflictual dialogues, and various forms of critique of the system, have naturally completely escaped your attention, since these do not fit comfortably with your hypothesis, which hinges on dismissing any positive aspects of 'parasitic' NGOs.

While you have entirely failed to note the positive processes and struggles faced by rights based organisations, you have repeatedly and extensively quoted certain individuals who are not even active in JAA or JSA just because their statements fit in with your hypothesis. I am not sure if this is what is called 'objective research' – but maybe some of us have old fashioned views about such things. Promoting your own viewpoint irrespective of the inconvenient facts, and choosing to quote only those persons, those facts and statements which fit your hypothesis, seems to be the 'in' thing, if one goes by your thesis.

Overall, you have completely failed to understand certain key processes, due to the blinkers of your pet framework. You have not been able to understand how a group of persons working in an organisation (like CHC, SAMA, SATHI, BGVS, CMAI or many others) can be committed to doing work for the larger movement beyond their project or paid work. You have chosen to reject the concept of 'organisational voluntarism' and in your very biased understanding, any work done by persons working in an NGO beyond their projects and for the larger movement is only for 'material gains'. Even though many members of the team in the organisation may be involved in such activities, in your understanding this is only because the leaders of the

organisations force junior team members to participate in such activities. And you propose the highly derogatory term 'parasitic voluntarism' which dismisses all such activism as being 'parasitic' on the organisation.

Let us see how 'parasite' is defined by the Oxford online dictionaries:

1 an organism which lives in or on another organism (its host) and benefits by deriving nutrients at the other's expense
2 *derogatory* a person who habitually relies on or exploits others and gives nothing in return

(www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/parasite?view=uk)

If we take the second definition, then it is more or less the opposite of an NGO where the members, over and beyond the social contributions of their project work, seek to put in extra efforts and gives inputs for social campaigns or movement activities. The NGO *takes* from society and funding agencies, funds for certain projects, but *gives back* to society not only the work it is committed to, but also something beyond this (does this sound slightly different from definition 2 above?). Being a native English speaker, I do not think you would be totally ignorant of the derogatory connotation of the label 'parasite' as in definition 2, yet you have decided to make this one of the key categories of your analysis. If it were not completely misplaced factually, I would say it was highly denigrating on your behalf. A little reflection by you would reveal that most voluntary work or activism done by people is based on support from some source – people rely on their families, their regular jobs, academic institutions, friends and supporters and so on for certain resources, they fulfil their obligations in these roles and yet base themselves on this support to also contribute to movements. By your definition, all these forms of taking support by volunteers are 'parasitic' – placing them in the ambit of the derogatory definition given above.

A more fact-based and balanced analysis on your part might have helped all of us to understand both those aspects of JAA/JSA and the health movement which are seriously retarding it (of course there are many such aspects) and the processes which are positive, which need to be strengthened to help the movement to move forward with genuine community empowerment. Unfortunately, in your one-dimensionally negative and essentially cynical narrative, there are no positive forces, no redeeming features, no examples of what has actually been done and can be done positively, and hence needs to be strengthened while overcoming the various negative tendencies.

As a result, I fear that Brendan, while your thesis might undoubtedly be considered intellectually provocative and of great personal use to you in obtaining a PhD and furthering your academic career, in its current form it is entirely useless for health activists working and struggling in India. In fact, being inspired by you, and drawing upon the Oxford definition above, given our experience with you I am now thinking of developing a definition of '*parasitic researcher*' as follows:

'a researcher who works in context of another organisation (its host) and benefits by deriving information at the other's expense; a person who relies on or intellectually exploits others and gives nothing in return'

Your thesis does not offer us any clues of how to correct our deficiencies, how to build upon our positive struggles and refine our strategies, and how to carry forward the health movement.

Yours is ultimately an inexpressibly dreary and depressing narrative, where in your own words, all the actors are compromised (including people's organisations), most appear degenerate, and there appears to be nothing positive and hence no hope at all.

Although there are extensive factual errors in your thesis combined with highly tendential interpretations, I suppose that you would be familiar with the term 'participatory research'. In this context, I would like to suggest that ***you must allow some space for your research participants to directly contribute to your thesis***. Since you are unlikely to be able to correct the innumerable factual errors on your own, I would like to suggest that you allocate a separate chapter, or at least an annexure, which allows members of JAA and JSA who have been the main subjects of your study, to write their views and their interpretations of major processes, even if these contrast with your own. Although only some JSA members may have the time and energy to do this, I offer, along with any others who may be interested, to contribute to this 'participatory' chapter. Given that you have criticized all of us working in rights based NGOs of 'replacing' people and not allowing their own voices to emerge, I am sure you would strongly support this suggestion of mine, which would allow the direct, uncensored voices of some of your research participants to also see the light of the day in your thesis.

I conclude on a note of sadness, since I feel that your thesis and considerable work of nearly three years has been a major wasted opportunity. We opened our offices, our minds and even our hearts to you, and shared our innermost thoughts, hoping that at the very least you would sincerely understand our struggles, conflicts and dilemmas. Unfortunately, you chose to use the information shared by us very selectively and in a distorted manner which has not helped to illuminate and strengthen the processes of the health movement that you sought to study. Instead of taking a nuanced approach to a complex situation, to further your hypotheses you have focused only on the most negative aspects of organisations and processes, the contradictions and conflicts, without viewing them in a larger context and in their entirety as part of a social process of change that is gradually moving forward, albeit with many difficulties. Although the health movement, like the proverbial 'monkey' which you begin your thesis with, has been full of defects and problems, we should recognize that it has been struggling and moving ahead over the last decade, it has been climbing the tree in its own way. Unfortunately, without understanding the entire monkey, you seem to have taken excessive inspiration from the quote and have chosen to exclusively focus on, to study, and to analyse it only from its back end.

With regards,
Abhay

(Aman)

Some Objectionable statements in Brendan's draft thesis

Page No.91

some groups in Maharashtra apparently argued that "female foeticide is not so important as violence against women" (Interview transcript)

Although it is by no means clear that it is appropriate to do so, it is possible to see this 'struggle' between the female foeticide and violence against women agendas in terms of a struggle between the non-AIPSN faction and AIPSN factions in JSA (see chapter 3, and the next section of this chapter).

Page No. 94

SATHI now appeared as a *de facto* leader of JSA, mainly because of the conditions that working with NHRC imposed on JSA

In addition, the campaign meant that for the first time money specifically earmarked for JSA activities came into circulation. This money came from NHRC for organising the regional public hearings. As JSA was not a registered organisation the money came to SATHI. Endowed with inertia by its MoU with the NHRC and the responsibilities, commitments and deadlines this entailed, JSA became more like an organisation.

Page NO. 95

After explaining to SATHI why they felt this was the wrong direction in which to go and receiving what they deemed to be an unsatisfactory response, MAHILA stopped attending JAA meetings and applied their energies elsewhere. At this point SATHI became *de facto* leader of JAA and, MAHILA felt, JAA became an NGO project. "We would have a JAA meeting and 4 people would turn up from SATHI, while one person turns up from each of the other organisations involved. Why? Why do they need 4? Because SATHI has money for the campaign as a project" (Notes from interview). Immediately the motives of those 4 people come into question. Are they at the meeting because they think it is important or because they are paid to be there? How can they earn from it, when everyone else contributes time to the campaign voluntarily in addition to the work for which they are paid? "It was our campaign, now it's their project" (Notes from interview). A key question raised by this narrative is why BGVS reduced their involvement in JAA,

Page No. 97

In the process, ideology, organisational structure and logistics are mobilised to 'clothe' changes in relationships that often have much more to do with a 'macro' politics of factions and affiliations on the one hand, and 'micro' personal differences and personality clashes on the other.

Page No. 98

One way of understanding the politics of JAA in Maharashtra is by tracing it from the moment, many years before the formation of JSA, in which three prominent Pune-based activists working together in the science movement fell out with each other. All three followed a leftist ideology, but two of them were linked to CPM while the third was linked to Shramik Mukti Dal (SMD), a small political party associated with a *sanghatna* in Kolhapur district. The first worked as a full-timer with CPM in Nandurbar district and is today a significant figure in the party in Maharashtra, the second, Datta Desai, worked with BGVS as a full-timer and is today one of its leaders in Maharashtra, and the third, Dr Ameya, initially worked as a full-timer with SMD and Lok Vigyan Sanghatna (Marathi: People's Science Movement), a science movement organisation with no connection to CPM or BGVS, and later worked with the health NGOs FRCH and CEHAT before forming SATHI in 1997.

In this chapter I have described how SATHI won the struggle over the future of JAA partly because BGVS had no interest in contesting the leadership, but more importantly because SATHI's position became far stronger than any possible contender when they launched the Right to Health Care campaign in 2003. Rather than signifying the end of *all* struggle, however, it is still worthwhile for MAHILA to outline a passionate critique of JAA when speaking to an anthropologist in 2007 because SATHI's victory in JAA was a victory on only one battlefield in a warzone encompassing the whole of the field of social action.

Page No. 99

it really is the differences in organisational structure between BGVS and rights-based NGOs that makes it difficult for them to work together, because these differences mean they have different strengths and weaknesses

In contrast, SATHI brought to JAA (and JSA) a certain inertia that made the network more visible, its demands more audible, even as it also brought in hierarchy, narrowness of scope, and other aspects of institutionalisation that made it harder – or impossible – for certain voices to be heard.

Page No. 106

JSA was thrown into an existential crisis, because while all members of JSA had been against the "rather right-wing" BJP-led NDA central government, BGVS/AIPSN wanted to work with the UPA and its Left Front supporters, the anti-CPM *sanghatnas* wanted to work against the UPA, and the rights-based NGOs found themselves trapped by the tensions between the contradictory imperatives of their parasitic voluntarism (chapter 4): their non-radical professional (paid) identity wanted to work with the UPA because the UPA was offering lots of opportunities to 'civil society' organisations, and their radical activist (voluntary) identity wanted to work against the UPA with the *sanghatnas*.

Page No. 108

SATHI agreed to host the National Secretariat of JSA that would ensure JSA met the terms of the agreement with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and Sudhir took responsibility for the National Secretariat.

Page NO. 109

The RTHC campaign involved a shift from a politics focused on engagement with the oppressed to a politics focused on engagement with the state.

"Meetings would become forums where 15 different people made 15 different presentations on different rights – right to mental health, right to child health, etc. – and at the end, what do you do with it? Everyone is talking about something different, carving out their own niche, and often because they were chasing funding allocated to a specific aspect of health such as mental health"

. "It's not even Right to Health," I was told, "it's *access* to healthcare – *very* narrow, focusing on doctors and dispensaries and drug availability, and there is a need for work on these issues but as part of a broader platform of issues" (Notes from interview). Structuring the campaign around the NHRC hearings meant that "the campaign became 'this one case in this one village, this one case in this other village', with no examination of the broader context; that one case is not all that is happening in that village" (Notes from interview).

Page No. 110-11

For this individual, what the *jan sunwai* format changed was the *means* of asserting the authority to represent, but the *purpose* of the assertion remained the same: to enable the JSA to speak for the population, not to enable the individual to speak for him or herself; to demand policy change, not redress for the victim. That this is the case is suggested by a report of the regional hearing held in Raipur, which notes that during the proceedings "Those present decided to turn our focus from the individual cases to the structural causes as we thought that would be a better use of time" (ref). One of my informants referred to this use of testimonies as pornographic, and this term might be particularly apposite to describe a situation in which a victim is asked to describe what happened to him/her in graphic, 'horrifying' detail, for the gratification of observers.

Page No. 111

---- civil society organisations acknowledge and are aware and take account of the consequences of their actions. This is what didn't happen in the JSA's RTHC campaign. The civil society organisation comes in from outside, and says to the people, give us testimonies of denial of healthcare. So the people do, and they're the ones that lose out, while seeing hardly any of the benefits. See, after the public hearings, then there are backlashes from the local healthcare system. I know a case of a doctor hiring local *goondas* [thugs] to beat a man up because he gave a testimony. I know of cases where a doctor has simply refused to treat anyone from the village where a testimony came from. And even if the civil society organisations say to government, this backlash is happening, you need to stop it, what can the government do, they go to the doctor, they spend a day there, then they're gone and the doctor and villager are locked back in their relationship [*his hands circle each other in the air*] seeing each other on an everyday basis. So what there needs to be is that those who would give testimonies are

informed of the probable consequences. But there's a problem with that because it can be difficult to properly get across what the consequences are. (Fieldnotes)

Page No. 115

The leadership of JSA could take up the roles offered by the UPA government because of the way their organisations fit well into the definition of civil society dominant in policy circles –

Page 116

. Some in JSA, especially those who were sceptical of all mainstream political parties, dismissed the UPA as "more of the same" and the NRHM as "population policy repackaged" (coordinator of MAHILA, notes from interview).

The conflict between these positions within JSA was resolved with the decision that JSA would retain its position as a critical voice 'outside' government, but at the same time individuals and organisations within JSA could work with the government as they saw fit but 'not as JSA'. As we will see below, this resolution was unstable and contested in and around meetings of the JSA National Coordination Committee during my fieldwork between 2007 and 2009.

Page No. 117

These three points probably contributed to the way the People' Rural Health Watch activity developed. By the end, many in JSA were of the opinion that in almost all the states involved the data collection process was lacklustre, the data collected was mediocre, and no efforts had been made to use the data collection process or the data as a tool for mobilisation or advocacy. An important exception was Chhattisgarh, where the process was led by Lakshmanan and activists of strong organisations of the poor (in particular Binayak Sen and Sulakshana).

At the opposite extreme to such service-providing organisations were the radicals, led by organisations of the people such as AIDWA and NAPM, who "don't really think that this government is serious" and so take a position of "only building up people's protest so that there is a structural change [...] engagement is not with the understanding that you can force the government to change but that you can expose the government's non-changing" (Interview transcript).

Page No. 119-120

The coordinator of MAHILA put it slightly differently, describing community monitoring as reacting rather than shaping policy, "presenting a list which says 'a is wrong in village b, c is wrong in PHC d', rather than saying 'the NRHM is shaped by international and national actors with an overriding interest in population control, and we should reject it on this basis'" (Notes from interview). Both Krishna and the coordinator of MAHILA rejected the idea that the 'plus' element of community monitoring plus could legitimise and exonerate [check] the community monitoring *programme*, which they saw as inherently flawed simply by virtue of being a government programme.

Page No. 122

Their careers positioned Sudhir and Lakshmanan in particular ways as individuals (

also build on what he himself had previously done and thereby ensure he continued to be positioned in the centre of JSA.

Page No. 123

SATHI and many of the other NGOs in JSA had people in their employ and needed to pay salaries, and several programmes of NRHM offered attractive opportunities for NGOs to take on implementation. To get the best of both worlds, Sudhir and others in the leadership of JSA tied themselves in a knot: as JSA we are not entering into implementation, but as organisations we will do so. In particular, SATHI and many others got involved in both the community monitoring programme and ASHA training. In effect, Sudhir (like so many others) took two positions at once, one position with regard to the paid work of his organisation, and another with regard to his organisational voluntarism.

Page No. 124

Those he (Sudheer) recruited only paid lip-service to doing the work of the People's Rural Health Watch, and for the most part did community monitoring rather than community monitoring 'plus'. Further,

these two activities did not manage to sync with each other in the way hoped for; there was no enthusiasm for doing so.

In addition, the fact that Sudhir became the key broker for the community monitoring programme meant that he was able to exercise a form of patronage, bringing JSA members into the programme and the funding that came with it, and thereby substantially modifying the power relation between him and others in JSA.

Page No. 127

in the field of social action, all players compromise or lose, and although considerable benefits can be gained by claiming to have made fewer compromises than your competitors, the mechanisms by which players make these claims can cause considerable problems when a sudden change occurs in their immediate environment.

the theoretical approaches introduced in chapter 1 are brought to bear on the health for all campaign in 2000, demonstrating how an analysis that 'feeds off' (Latour ref) the controversies between actors can facilitate our understanding of the questions of political representation posed by their collaboration, the diversity of the actors the collective brings together, and the ways actors use narratives not only to position themselves as key players but also to maintain their self-image as principled activists despite their association with activists they consider to be unprincipled.

Page No. 128

The concept of parasitic voluntarism involves the NGO professional dividing him/herself in two, so that the individual has a non-radical professional (paid) identity and a radical activist (voluntary) identity.

From 2003 to 2004 JSA became visible to the state through its collaboration with NHRC, but this came at the cost of institutionalisation and the introduction of a hierarchy in which some JSA members were seen to benefit disproportionately.

The rupture that occurs when the UPA central government replaces the NDA throws into relief all the compromises made by the non-party left rights-based NGOs *and* the left party front organisations (that is, the science movement) and demonstrates exactly how both parasitic voluntarism and the broad coalition brought together in JSA worked well under certain 'environmental conditions' but no longer do.

Page No. 128-129

Among the revisions I still need to make to the thesis one stands out, which is that at present my analysis lends itself to an interpretation in which the *sanghatnas* get off 'scot-free', without having made a compromise. In fact they have made a compromise, and the consequences of this come through most clearly in chapter 4. The compromise they make is that by accepting money from the NGO professional they tie themselves into a reciprocal relationship with the NGO professionals who they cannot trust to take decisions responsibly and who can, and do, sometimes take decisions that could cause problems for the *sanghatna*. The NGO professionals cannot be trusted because, as argued in chapter 6, they do not face the 'double bind' faced by the *sanghatna* activist when they take decisions, but take decisions 'as if' they were *sanghatna* activists themselves; in this way they adopt 'false positions', and it is these false positions that can harm the *sanghatna* activist. By agreeing to work with the NGO professional (ultimately, for money), the *sanghatna* activist places him/herself in that position of danger.

****

(SUNDAR)

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Re: Draft of PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

Dr.T.Sundararaman <sundararaman.t@gmail.com> **Wed, Dec 1, 2010 at 9:13 AM**
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Dear Brendan,

I am missing something here. I confess, I have not read any version of what yu have been writing- but this recent exchage makes me feel that perhaps I am missing something. To me your thesis was "your thing"- and you are entitled to your opinions- however objectionable it may be to me. That is one reason why I never read it. I could have read it to help you but I just did not have the time and it really was not my priority. That was why I was always apologetic about meeting you. Never did think that it would be very useful to us, and it if it helps advance your career, I had no objections. Was willing to spare a bit of time to meet you, but purely to help a research student along his career path. As long as they are clearly your opinions and helps you get your doctorate, it should be OK. All sorts of thesis have been written about my work in different spheres and I take from it what is useful but otherwise just let it go. But then why all this efforts at consensus building. Am i missing something. Is it a public document- or some sort of evaluation of JSA. Why would JSA want to get evaluated by you. Do clarify. I never even inquired about your funding etc.- i

Now anyway that it is stirred up- I suppose I must locate the draft you have sent and take my time to read it during one of my travels- but I really hope that it is not going to absorb my time and even resent that my time given to helping you, is now going to cost me, or JSA, a lot of effort in replying to you or explaining to others. At least for that reason, I hope you have not written too much of the sort that obliges me to reply and go on record etc. If there is indeed anything scathing or objectionable or scurrilious about JSA or me I suppose I would give two lines or three lines to include- but I am not really clear- why? Just go ahead ...become Dr Brendan.... and get on with your life and we with ours.

Best wishes for your thesis and greetings
Sundararaman.

[Quoted text hidden]

(Sundar)

Dear Brendan Donegan,

I finally did get around to reading your thesis. What you meant when you told us that you were studying JSA and what I and I suppose a number of my "ambushed" friends, understood by it were worlds apart. I would broadly agree with all the comments that Abhay Shukla and Anant Phadke and Vandana Prasad and Manisha have sent to you. Abhay and Anant point out a sample of factual inaccuracies, all of which I agree with. To this, I would add that there are two more types of inaccuracies- one that comes from the use of conjecture to fill in information gaps, and another because you include your version of reasons and interpretations, seamlessly mixed with our quotations and reasons and interpretations- thus implicitly attributing to us views and motives that we would be much rather distanced from. It would be far too laborious for me to point out all of these- and I am not sure whether there is much point. After all even all our versions of what is a hard fact could be, in your technique, substituted by another version on the grounds that even a single players view- however marginal his or her role- had such an alternative version of the fact to offer.

Let me offer you another game analogy – to your Scrabble playing idiom. Imagine then a description of a foot-ball tournament- without any reference to the purpose- scoring goals, winning matches- or without any reference to the other teams- either the competing team in that match, or the other teams on the tournament- and without any reference to the audience – within the stadium or outside. The sole focus of description is how players jostle for their position in the team- whether they are played as centre-forwards , or half- backs, or full backs or the captain, or have to sit on the bench. Reference to goals, and the interaction with other teams occur – but only a backdrop to its implication on the positioning of different players. No doubt every football team has such dynamics, and knowing this dynamic may even help a coach manage his team better. But could this description, be called an understanding of the game, or even help define strategy, or how to score more goals and win the match. Football teams squabble in the dressing room, but pull together on the field. But in your description of the game, scoring goals and winning matches becomes a means to altering the position from which a particular member plays and advancing the dressing room squabble, and there is even implicit denial of any collective celebration or feeling of loss or any strategy of cooperation between the members of the team!!! In your version of football, there is no team at all, only jostling, competing individuals. This is the version of the game and match that you invite us to join you in the description of. And I am aware of a view that it is not for us to judge or censor, since in this game only " peers " are qualified to do so and since the rest of us are trapped in the dichotomy of being government or being civil society and thereby get excluded from being peers- it would not even be relevant. So I do not judge the thesis, much less attempt to censor it. And I do not labour to describe further to you – all that you have *not* covered- the goals of JSA, the degree of success and limitations it has had in setting up a public discourse on health rights, the role it has played in shaping NRHM and health policy, the fights it has had with persons and institutions hostile to the shared objectives of JSA and health equity and so on. I take it now, that these were not the object of your study and I take your invitation seriously "to view it as a partial interpretation shaped by the exigencies of the fieldwork encounter and by my sense of what it was appropriate for me to write" and follow you down your path.

But let me express my surprise, that having taken the invitation to walk along with you and see you your version of the game as an endless jostling for positioning, you could get even the description of that dimension so completely off the mark. I am afraid, Brendan, that this description of the

struggle between Abhay and me for having the leadership position within the JSA- is simply not true and quite a bit absurd and bizarre. While I have always differed on a number of issues and positions from Anant and Abhay, and continue to do so, much of my own understanding has developed because of the very productive nature of this dialogue- and some of my best time in life has been spent in argument with them. I never do lose an opportunity to invite them to a whole lot of government consultations and meetings that I hold in my SHSRC/NHSRC capacity, simply because it is so useful to have their point of view expressed. And SATHI-CEHAT and every member on their team, have also shown the same spirit in their interaction with me. I get innumerable requests for my presence in a number of meetings they hold and am able to attend only a few of them- but even that is quite a lot and not quite consistent with your understanding of us as competitors for a finite space. My official designation and my informal position and influence within JSA has not changed from year 2000 to now- though the time I am able to spend on it has changed, due to changing priorities on my time, and this has had so little to do with Abhay. The status I have in my paid employment and the emoluments I take home is about the same as I would have had, if I had continued in the paid position I was in, in the year 2000. If anything, I would have been a bit better off . Not once or twice, but repeatedly the leadership of SATHI-Cehat have been persuading me to increase my time and role in JSA. If I had spent more time and gained more visibility, it would hardly have displaced Abhay or Anant.

That is not to deny that there is no jostling for positioning that goes on- but Brendan- *this* is not it. There were many real issues and contests on positioning - but you have largely missed all of that. Let me place on record, that the arguments between Abhay and myself over the positions we take on issues do NOT reflect any wrangles for positioning of ourselves, vis a vis each other- and this whole climax you build up of JSA dynamics as represented by the struggle between the two of us- is in the realm of fiction- pure and simple.

Since fiction was not your intention, I wonder how you got to it. Perhaps, Brendan, if you had told us frankly, that this was what you were interested in looking at, we could have helped, get you a better description of these dimensions also. But your method seems to have locked you into discussing and appearing to discuss only about the goals, while all the while, almost surreptitiously, you were seeking to describe altogether another dynamic. Or maybe you did tell us and we did not listen. The time I personally gave you was so little, that I am quite amazed that you made so much of it, and being perhaps forced to bridge information gaps by conjecture, you arrive at a description so tangential to reality. (The usual literary device on such semi-biographical accounts is to put a cautionary note saying that there is no connection with people dead or alive, and any such appearance is purely coincidental).

But then I confess, in fairness to you, that if you had told us that this was your real interest, we may never have allowed you into our meetings and homes. SATHI has really done so much to host and support you. Why would we? When we invite a guest home for a feast – we do not really expect them to be leering at our ass(apropos your poignant opening sentence for the entire book- the more the monkey climbs the tree, the more you see of its ass). And then getting even that wrong!!! And, oh, the sadness of it all. Look at how much could have been written, how much need there was for documenting and assessing the work of the JSA. With so much time and effort and expense that not only you, but also SATHI, spent on this study, how much could have been done! If only the focus had been on the feast instead. If only...

You know, Brendan, in my family, we play a lot of Scrabble. Scrabble in our family and in our friend circle is a rather fun game. It is a time of bonding- the game itself is only an adjunct. Players lean across the board to help each other.(we have a rule variation that if anyone gets stuck with a Q without an U an exchange is allowed.) There is much laughter, coffee gets served, the room is warm and there is a feeling of closeness. I do not recognise this cold calculating game of Scrabble, that you describe. Even in fiction there are genres that are love-less, devoid of passion and purpose. And such genres of fiction do command their own audience, even occasionally win the Nobel- but I would not buy the book.

T. Sundararaman.

Re: Draft of PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

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dear brendan,
i have not read the whole piece but some portions circulated by anant. i have two broad observations to make based on the portions i have read.

1. where the jan sunwais were concerned, you seem to have picked up a very common and superficial refrain of how people 'felt used' or 'were used'. i can only say that as organisers, every effort was made to explain what the jan sunwais were expected to achieve and WHAT THEY WERE NOT expected to achieve. it would have been better to understand jan sunwai as one tool in one's armamentarium and criticise the jsa process correctly by saying it should only have been applied where there was other strong work going on on teh ground. that would have been more reasonable than allying with the idea that the campaign used petitioners. i have been involved with jan sunwais for about 18 years now and it is a complex, tricky and dodgy tool to use. there was nothing particularly or specifically wrong with the jsa process.

2. in the complex issues you bring up related to voluntarism and paid work, sangathan and NGO etc you project a polarisation that is so neat and clean and clear and surgical. in real life it is not like that at all. i do understand the need as a researcher to say things sharply adn appear to be creating 'new' knowledge, but really - all these debates and discussions that you seem to reveal are neither new to jsa nor new to people experienced in the social sector in india. i think people in jsa- including those of sathi cehat are quite self aware and all of us are working under a number of contradictions, compromises and conflicts. i think you have made too much out of it, also because there are no easy solutions and it is gnerally speaking not mal intent that creates this situation, but a genuine failure to find spaces to intervene. of course, i do not say that there is no aspect of career building, self promotion etc etc - of course there is, but all said and done, there has been quite a degree of frank and forthroght discussion around these things. these issues are pretty much out there in the open, so maybe you could change your tone a little to not make it all seem so revelatory. generally speaking - the truth is far from so exciting or dramatic. this is a bit like creating a breaking-news-media-type hype rather than serious research. i would have liked some depth of empathy and understanding.

other wise - i am sure it will make interesting reading as an outsider's point of view.

warm regards

2.

Gmail

Ravi Narayan <chcravi@gmail.com>

Re: Draft of PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

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Dear Brendan,

I have read two chapters of your thesis, and I think they wonderfully capture the contradictions that encapsulate our work in JSA, within a theoretical discourse that I do not always agree with, especially the views of some theoreticians you work with. But thats an entirely different issue. I think your review of literature is quite exhaustive - and that is reassuring to me in a world where reading, reflection and intellect are being constantly undermined.

I must remind you that as I spoke with you, you also have an academic commitment to your discipline, which means you do not necessarily have to be "censored" by respondents who "interfere" with "truth" as you see it. Truth as you see it is what a thesis is about. About this, you will be judged not by the government or "civil society" but by peers. This is not a perfect world, and this is what we have today. This cannot be resolved by ethics discourse, which is almost entirely capital-driven and individual based.

There may be many points on which I disagree with you - as indeed there are, but that obliges me to contest these in a review or in another work; you obviously should not forsake your academic right to your interpretation, your way of looking at things.

That said, I also wish it were possible for Indian students to study INGOs and their work - even in London. That is unfortunately not possible given the way "knowledge" is generated in the world today. I wish you would mention this privelege you have, and the humilities this should impose.

Best wishes,
Mohan Rao

[Quoted text hidden]

Re: Draft of PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (RAJIB)

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Dear Brendan

I have read the draft [which you bravely chose to share] and opinions expressed in recent e-mails. I have not been your respondent and write this to refer to certain methodological guideposts, as a student and practitioner of qualitative research.

The Methodology section is more about disclaimers than methods *per se*. In what is certainly a very complex study the word 'triangulation' doesn't appear even once. I'd imagine that triangulation is one of the key challenges that you'd face given that there would be degrees of overlap and fuzziness of the processes that you have sought to unravel. I am aware that overzealous check-listing can and does constrict qualitative research. Nevertheless, a clear account of the process of data collection and analysis is non-negotiable.

The disagreements expressed can perhaps be attributed to the feeling that the thesis has sought to represent 'the truth' as you see it, rather than 'represent the reality'; a difficult situation for a researcher. I am befuddled by the course you have adopted "to incorporate corrected facts plus alternative view points" [your mail dated 2 December]. Respondent validation (again, doesn't appear even once) as a technique needs a systematic approach, built into the methodology; and not a *post facto* "course of action in order to take feedback into account" in consultation with your supervisor [your mail dated 1 December]. I have no doubts about the seriousness of you as a researcher from a globally respected institution and your supervisor as an academic of acclaim; all the more my confusion. A knee jerk reaction carries with it a risk of the tail wagging the dog [apologies, inspired by the opening metaphor of the thesis]!

Regards and best wishes for a successful submission.
Rajib

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Responses to your thesis.

Ravi Narayan <chcravi@gmail.com> **Fri, Dec 10, 2010 at 7:14 PM**
To: Brendan Donegan <brendan_zappa@yahoo.com>
Cc: toekbalb@gmail.com, abhayseema@vsnl.com, ctddsf@vsnl.com, guhaamitava_@hotmail.com, ajaykharebpl2003@yahoo.co.in, vakkan2000@yahoo.com, thelma.narayan@gmail.com, subharakhal@gmail.com, premdas@sochara.org, sama.womenshealth@gmail.com, narendra531@rediffmail.com, renukhanna@gmail.com, sundararaman.t@gmail.com, chaukhat@yahoo.com, mshiva@phmovement.org, mirashiva@yahoo.com, imrana@mail.jnu.ac.in, sudipta@popfound.org, mohanrao2008@gmail.com, dhananjay.kakde@gmail.com, arogyasathi@rediffmail.com, cehatpun@vsnl.com, chandrima_bchatterjee@yahoo.com, leni_chaudhuri@hotmail.com, rduggal57@gmail.com, cehatindore@rediffmail.com, lakshmi.lingam@gmail.com, masumfp@vsnl.com, anant.phadke@gmail.com, jsagade@yahoo.com, sant@sathicehat.org, samrat.shirvalkar@gmail.com, renuka301@yahoo.com, dhwani.katagade@gmail.com, abhijitdas@chsj.org, sahajbrc@youtele.com, ampitre@yahoo.com, nilanginaren@gmail.com, 21.sangeeta@gmail.com, tathapi@tathapi.org, sunita@chsj.org, indira.chakravarthi@yahoo.co.in, nhpp@airtelmail.in, usrn_schoolhealth@yahoo.com, amulyabhai@gmail.com, devika_biswas@yahoo.co.in, manishagupte@gmail.com, dasgupta_jnu@yahoo.com, weareraman@gmail.com, popfound@sify.com, radhahb@yahoo.com, csathyamala@gmail.com, brianlobo6@gmail.com, drvvinay@gmail.com, D.Legge@latrobe.edu.au, globalsecretariat@phmovement.org, saldanha@tiss.edu, ramila.bisht@gmail.com

Dear Brendan,

Greetings from CPHE - Sochara, Bangalore!

We spent the last week, amidst competing commitments, going through the pre-final draft of your doctoral thesis in detail. Being among your key informants/ respondents, and also in our role as active members of an emerging centre of 'scholar activists', where you spent some time, we thought it was an ethical imperative to seriously review your draft. It is also in appreciation of your courage in taking on a very complex contemporary social issue for study and to check for interpretations/ misinterpretations that are likely to occur in such an exercise.

Trying to understand a multidimensional mosaic of structures, relationships and initiatives that feature under the umbrella of JSA would have been a challenge for any Indian social science researcher or ethnographer, even with greater experience of the nuances of qualitative research, and a deeper understanding of the Indian social reality. For a "*white, British, middle class, heterosexual male, without 'real job' experience*" this is a very daunting task, not withstanding the attempts at cultural immersion, gaining some local language knowledge and establishing a good social support network.

We have read your thesis keeping in mind some of the parameters that you have outlined for yourself in your introductory chapter which include:

a) "*This is not a researcher's 'objective assessment' of JSA*".
b) "*It is only a 'partial interpretation' having explained some of the elements which define how you are positioned and influence what you write*".
c) "*A formative thesis, that is of interest and of practical use to JSA, PHM and activists more broadly*".
d) *Not an 'ambush on social life'*
e) *Based on an awareness of the possibility of conflicting narratives and the vagueness and multiplicity of JSA's identities because of diversity of actors and agendas which JSA bring together.*
f) *Not an 'omniscient god's eye view' of the theme but as an actor producing interpretation that are no more valid than those of other actors- because they are based on data that is no different to the data on which other actors build their interpretation- incomplete, partial and fragmented*"

However keeping all these in mind we do have mixed feelings as we outline our response to your request to provide feedback, which we do under three major headings.

1. Factual errors and some misrepresentations
2. Methodical and ethical challenges including context, analysis and extrapolations
3. The possible learning's for JSA

This is all we can now offer, in the rushed time schedule which you have given us in your call to respond. Collaborative ethnography if it is to be real needs to start with clear understandings between the collaborators at the start of the research process, and also with adequate respect for time of all participants in the different stages.

Overall, in the light of your own research agenda given in the appendix, which was unusually ambitious to begin with, you have tackled only two of six objectives outlined. By limiting the objective and the focus of the analysis you have also reduced the scope of your study- as reported in this thesis. In which case perhaps your title of the thesis should also be subjected to a modification to ensure that your examiners do not see your work as incomplete and inadequately analysed, which they would when the report /thesis is taken in its present state of completion.

After the enclosed response was completed, we have also read the responses, of all our fellow colleagues in the movement – most of who have also been among your key informants. The commonality, the frankness, and the diversity of responses represent the trust and the respect we have for the process and for each other within this diverse network. The strength of the JSA is this diversity with which we are all comfortable despite differences in position and experience.

While some responses may sound negative and even cynical we do feel you should give the different suggestions serious consideration. We endorse many points raised. We have the collective maturity in JSA to see your ethnographic study in context, but we must admit that it does seem to have inadvertently become an ambush of CEHAT/JSA while attempting to be a reasoned debate, due to the focus on conflict only, rather than capturing the plurality, democracy and solidarity as well. The game of scrabble you describe is closer to the war games of today's big powers, rather than the family oriented, fun filled game that we are all used to!

While subjecting some JSA praxis to theoretical analysis, based on ideas drawn from various theories, evolved in different in social realities, and with a limited set of interviews and interpretation that is being contested, you seem to have missed an opportunity to evolve new theory from praxis, subjecting existing theory to the paradigms and challenges of grounded evidence. There are innumerable individual and collective instances and examples of solidarity and friendships that exist, along with new ones that have emerged and continue to evolve in the diverse health activist community in India and in JSA in particular which you have undermined or lost in the controversy of conflicting narratives. In many of the narratives these are mentioned and you have also included them briefly here and there. We do not expect you to write a flattering note but a balanced one identifying negative and positive tendencies and trends and the emerging strategies developing to handle contradictions.

We have tried to understand, what new evidence you have been able to put together from your analysis but we find lack of clarity on this in your thesis. This is perhaps because the concluding and summing up chapter is incomplete. Apart from the factual errors, outlined in the attached note, which you could introduce into the thesis, our other comments are suggestions to be considered as you finalize the thesis. Ultimately it is your thesis, but we offer this response in a spirit of dialogue and mutual learning.

With best wishes,

Ravi.& Thelma Narayan.

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Brendan JSA Thesis Review by RN. 10.12.2010.doc
85K

A response to the thesis of Brendan Donegan on - An Anthropological study of health activism in western India

A) Factual errors/ omissions/ inadvertent misrepresentations
(To be introduced into thesis if possible)

There are many little errors in the thesis because it seems narrative has been given preference over documented evidence sometimes. The most important of these that require your immediate attention are:

i) P5 - CHC should be CHC/CPHE (Centre for Public Health and Equity), SOCHARA

ii) P9 – Glossary could include '*Chai*' and '*Pohe*'

iii) P45 – the so called 'reductionist simplification' is not RN's creation but a reference to a metaphor in the mfc debate in its second anthology – Health Care which way to go (see preface which describes the two schools of thought that were prevalent in the 1970's)

iv) P45 – Dr. N.H. Antia was a 'Surgeon who pioneered plastic surgery in India' not a cardiologist. (see A life of change – The Autobiography of a doctor-Noshir- H Antia, Penguin, 2009)

v) P45 – **"Alternatives approaches to Health Care"** is a monograph of the Indian Council of Medical Research based on a proceeding of a national symposium organized jointly by ICMR and ICSSR in 1976 in India (Pre Alma Ata) and not a committee report. Dr. Antia participated and presented a paper on alternatives to health care system based on the FRCH project in North Alibag and Uran taluks in Maharastra.

vi) P 45- The ICSSR /ICMR report "**Health for All"** an Alternative strategy is not Ramalingaswami 1980 but ICSSR 1981. This is a committee report which had Ramalingaswami has chairman and Dr. Antia as member secretary.

vii) P 45 - In, 1980 there was another ICMR Monograph on **"Evaluation of Primary Health Care Programmes"** in which Dr. Antia, Dr. Banerjee, and Dr. Ravi Narayan linked later to the JSA participated. Over 30 other primary health care innovators from the Community Health Movement, in India also participated.(Ramalingaswami was the DG – ICMR and the main organizer - Did you mean this?)

viii) P 45 - Antia and Banerjee are not just Gandhian and Marxist and or two contrasting starting points for health activist but part of the same emerging body of radical health philosophers in India in the 1970's - perhaps two poles within the same community and inspiration to the health activist and community movement in India from the 1970's. They are like the Yin and Yang of the health movement.

ix) P46 - JP did not say this in this way - specifically but the gist of the advice to the young medico's was something like that. Ramanathan's narrative gave the gist only but there are mfc bulletins which say what JP actually said (clarification only)

x) P45/46 Narayan Ravi (1992)- which is this document? The key document of Community Health Cell which gives a detailed analysis of health care in India – a

situation analysis, a methodological overview of an action, reflection, the description of community health in India, the movement dimension, the principles of community health evolving in the movement and outlining task for the feature is entitled **"Community Health : the search for an alternative process"** – a report of a study-reflection action experiment conducted from Jan 1984 to June 1986 and reported in March 1987 and mimeographed and widely distributed in the Community of Health activists in India.(This was a sabbatical output from a year as academic research visitor at LSHTM, London.) A comparison of your chapter to with this work would have been very interesting since this emerge from a participant observation in the movement during that period

xi) P45 - Banerjee did not just publish 'a number of key sociological studies of health and health care in India', which is an understatement. He provided a new framework for epidemiological, social cultural and political analysis of Health and family planning services in India and the postulates of a new theory and hypothesis (As one of the few health theorists from the global south, you could have given his theory more consideration in your historical overview. You have mentioned the documents but evidently not reviewed them.!

xii) P 52 - The Alma Ata Declaration did not 'identify' but 'reaffirmed' the WHO definition of health of 1948, which you have mentioned.("physical, mental and social well being")

xiii) P 56 the IPHN meeting in Bangalore was in November 1999

Some misrepresentations and or inadequate factual evidence.

xiv) P53 - **IPHN and PHA:**
The link between IPHN and PHA as described in this para is a misrepresentation. To be factually correct drawing from the fact of CHC being involved in both initiatives- the details are as follows: (We have used your paragraph but edited it further.)

At this time, while many groups and networks were involved in the planning of the first Global People's Health Assembly, another short lived civil society network emerged on the global scene, out of a group of civil society organizations and institutions engaging with WHO in policy dialogue between 1997 and 2000. This informal network named the International Poverty and Health Network(IPHN) had a secretariat initially based in WHO and organized meetings in Nairobi, Kenya in 1998 and Bangalore, India in 1999. CHC participated in both these meetings and was an active founding member of IPHN. At the Bangalore, IPHN meeting in November 1999, many invited participants from India and South Asia shared their involvement with the Global People's Health Assembly initiative. The IPHN declaration of Bangalore had many core elements similar to the People's Health Charter and became a precusor to it because of the active involvement of these participants. Apart from this link this meeting also resulted in the involvement of CHC in the PHA organization. Further on the sidelines of this meeting, the early negotiations with the science movement in India which was meeting separately near the venue, was initiated. They were invited to coordinate the preparations and build up in India towards the Global People's Health Assembly. Later at the annual meeting of AIPSN/BGVS in Bhuvaneshwar in Dec 1999 this was further operationalised.

xv) P53/54 - **Origins of JSS/JSA:**

Lakshmanan and Shivanandan's involvement in becoming the key/core persons of AIPSN after this annual meeting, is not a different story but an extension of it. The JSS secretariat was Chennai based with 'Shivanandan' mainly incharge with Lakshmanan from Pondicherry playing a very important, near full time role and supported by Ramanathan from Bangalore and Suresh from DSF in Delhi. There are minutes of all these meetings from Jan 2000, throughout that mobilization year which can be used for validation..(It is therefore wrong to say that no official record is available)

xvi) P53-57 – JSS Secretariat

While there may be different narratives and implications of these narratives as discussed in your thesis the issue of power play is 'much ado about nothing'. Shivanandan and Ramanathan played complementary roles during the build up towards JSS in Kolkatta along with many other network representatives in what was then called the National working group. Shivanandan and colleagues working closely with a certain group of networks and Ramanthan and colleagues working with a certain group of networks – bringing 18 of them together by April 2000 for the meeting in Hyderabad at the Central Institute of Langauges when the 5 little books were evolved. To present this as some sort of conflictual relation between two factions so early in the process – is a total misrepresentations of the phenomenal solidarity and collectivity that was actually experienced between both of them, and all the network representatives - that led to all that happened in 2000 – the booklets: the meetings at local district and state levels; the JSS in Kolkatta and many other related initiatives. This was an example of positive coordination between individuals representing multiple, political poles in the JSA collective and many differences in positions on various issues from representation, funding, selection of themes, etc were tackled within the solidarity ethos of that year and events that you have also discovered from the informants. Later under currents due to evolving factionalism may have affected interpretation of the events, but you need to validate the solidarity vs factional struggles as an evolutionary process.

xvii) P55 - "Ramanathan involvement with JSA since 2000"

This is incorrect because Ramanathan was an active member and Joint National convenor till April 2003. After a collective decision by JSA in Bhopal (Aug 2002), CHC was invited to host the PHM Global Secretariat on behalf of JSA and Ramanathan was nominated as the Coordinator of the Secretariat. He took over as the coordinator of the Global Secretariat in Jan 2003 at the Asia Social Forum and opted out of the leadership position in JSA (joint convenor) in April 2003, perceiving conflict of interest between his national and global role. Till July 2006 he stayed somewhat more distant from JSA, while others in CHC/SOCHARA continued to be a active members of the NCC –first with a CHC member as a joint convenor and later as a CHC/SOCHARA representative on NCC, with active participation at the state level as well. After July 2006 while he continued to be part of the Global governance he also resumed links with JSA as a resource person, not holding any leadership position since then.

You can therefore perhaps say that "**Ramanathan did not hold any leadership position in JSA since April 2003,** and the organization /collective he was part of continued active participation at various levels throughout the decade.

xviii) P 58-60 Network of Networks – which ones?

There is some confusion in this section of the thesis from the 'narratives' and from the [illegible]t evidence that could have been collected from various sources. We have demonstrat[illegible]y

creating Table-1, and 2 using your classification and showing the growth of the **'network of networks'** using two well known documents. Note some errors in your classification. Some clarification are also offered for the CHC/SOCHARA dichotomy that features in the text and for the concept of resource organizations included in the NCC as it evolved from JSS to JSA

Table – 1 - Networks included in National Coordination Committee of JSS (May -2000)

Health Networks	Women's Networks	Others
AIDAN	AIDWA	AIPSN
ACHAN	AIWC	BGVS
CHAI	JWP	FORCES
CMAI	NFIW	NAPM
FMRAI	NAWO	RK
MFC		
SOCHARA		
VHAI		

Source : JSS Booklet 3- Making Life Worth living

Table- 2 Networks/Resource Centres in National Coordination Committee of JSS Jan -2004

Health Networks	Women's Networks	Others	Resource Centres
AIDAN	AIDWA	AIPSN	JNU
ACHAN	JWP	AID	CEHAT
BPNI	NFIW	BGVS	CHC (SOCHARA)
CHAI	NAWO	FORCES	
CMAI		NAPM	
FMRAI		RK	
MFC			
VHAI			

Source : The Peoples Health Source Book, Jan 2004

Some Clarification on changes of Status /nomenclature/ additions / deletions

i) JSS has 19 networks in 2000. SOCHARA was included as a network, since it had professionals distributed in many states. Later as JSA evolved and a group of resource centres were introduced in the NCC, CHC the functional unit of SOCHARA was included in that list. This explains the dichotomy of the CHC /SOCHARA, often used interchangeably in JSA lists - since we are both network/resource centre. SOCHARA became a member of the NCC and CHC a part of the national working group.

ii) AIWC which was part of JSS dropped out and VHAI, NAPM and RK have been peripherally involved in JSA.

iii) In JSA – the new entrants as full NCC member are Association for India's Development, (AID); Breast feeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) BPNI, Centre for Community Health and Social Medicine (JNU) and Centre for Enquiry into Health Allied Themes (CEHAT) There is no discrepancy or agenda in the changes or additions/deletions even though narratives may be more or less informed.

B) Methodological Issues including ethics, context and transferability.

We find three major challenges that have not been either addressed or adequately clarified

a) **Methodology applied to hide the identity of your informants:**

You have used the 'change of name' as method but this makes no sense whatsoever when your changed name is described with organization and designation included. What are you hiding or protecting?

You have also used this some what anarchically sometimes mentioning actual names and some times their pseudonyms and the reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps you could use psueudonyms throughout the text and create a key informant table that gives additional affiliations that are generic not specific to reduce easy identification. This will also ensure that the focus is on the issue not the individual.

(We for one would not hesitate to let you name us, knowing full well that our narratives may be affected by our understanding, experience and of late memory as well.! We believe that we have established enough trust and credibility across the diversities you have described to handle any controversies as a result of narratives different from ours, taking responsibility for what we have said or not said. Other may take different and more cautious or nuanced positions.)

How are you deciding in each case? Sending a letter exploring how to manage the implications and to attempt to arrive at a consensus in methodology was appreciated. However as you have yourself observed, the ethical implications become more important only when something is written. Now is the time for process clarity.

From the reactions/responses of some of the others, a range of challenges from feeling personally hurt, to a feeling of being misrepresented, to a feeling of even being ignored, will have to be handled carefully and professionally. We think while your immediate thesis sent for the defence, may lack clarity on this aspect it becomes a very significant challenge when you begin to share the findings and the analysis more broadly. You will probably have to handle this ethically and professionally and make a small appendix that provides clarity so that it does not have to be extracted from here and there in your current text.

b) **Clarity of the study methodology including reduction of focus from original research agenda.**

This is more about dilemmas and challenges rather then dynamics and research framework. Even in ethnography focusing on narratives there is reason to evolve methods for validation to ensure that you build your narrative on evidence even if conflicting, that can be verified by some means like archival/documentation or by checking consistency, validity, transferability etc. In section 'A' of this note we have shown how the issue of who are the participating networks can be handled to balance narrative versus documented evidence.

i) How you proposed to do this in your data collection is not at all clear.

ii) Also if you compare your thesis as it stands today with the research proposal included in the appendix then you seem to have tackled only question 3 and not addressed 1,2 and 4-6.

iii) You have mentioned also 5 social groups that will be informants but from the thesis the focus is only on one group – the community of activists and its three types – *sanghatans*, left linked groups, and rights based NGOs. If any of your informants fall into the other groups this is not very clear.

iv) Another aspect in methodology is that you seem to be moving between [illegible]s objectives/ research questions and in level and focus within each chapter [illegible]n though you have tried to focus each chapter on one area. It is not often clear when you move from intra SATHI relationships to SATHI to other JAA members to JAA including SATHI with national JSA; and so on then using bits and pieces of narratives interchangeably to explain trends, tendencies and processes at [illegible]t

levels. Perhaps this is the challenge of ethnographic evidence and analysis of free flowing narratives. That is why it seems to many, to be less ethnography and more journalistic gossip, even if this is only inadvertently due to writing style. We think by rearranging your comments and discussions around different issues and levels a bit more carefully this apparent confusion and sense of anarchy can be diminished. In that sense your thesis does seem not yet in its final stages but getting there – sometimes not clear where!

v) Some how the thesis has also become more focussed on SATHI, reading sometimes as a participant observations study of SATHI with all the dynamics that are normally available in every organization – strengthens, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and contradictions. If you are studying JAA then this focus on SATHI even though it plays an important role in JAA and JSA must be better balanced. SATHI members have also pointed out many discrepancies which should be seriously addressed.

vi) Finally by using a western India cluster of activists and extrapolating from Maharastra evidence (JAA experience) conclusions about JSA at national levels is problematic. Even though you have national level informant evidence you have shown an ambitious tendency to draw more than is often called for. If you had even tried to analyse some Karnataka and Tamilnadu experience with JAA and MNI then Maharashtra – JAA evidence and controversies would have been put in better context. There are many differences at state level and hence the national is both a composite of different state experiences of JSA apart from being a 'negotiation' between the diverse elements within the NCC. . While we see the need to locate the local/state level in the context of national and international – your need to ensure a rigour of narratives at all levels to ensure that you can make some of the generalizations you have attempted.

vii) Overall by locating all your ethnographic evidence to narratives of three key informants – Sudhir, Shivanandan and Raghunathan with occasional evidence from a selected few you have limited your understanding of the National from the local and also done injustice inadvertently to all those individuals and networks at national level who contribute to the diversity of dialogue and action at national level. The national JSA is the outcome of the wide diversity of forces/networks/organizations represented in the NCC whose narratives would all be very different as well. Also by totally ignoring the many women activists who play important leadership roles as well in JSA and involving women activists at different levels to share only supportive evidence has missed - a very important dimension of the JSA architecture. In some way you thesis could be seen has both reductionist and patriarchal though that is a separate issue.

viii) You have used a lot of terminologies or created new ones that are both somewhat pejorative or in the language of war. Parasitic voluntarism – by your own definition on voluntarism would cover even sanghatan volunteers who derive support from family and friends and other sources. So the paid work of ngos does not become more parasitic than other sources of support. If you wish to continue the difference to explain the contradiction perhaps "dependent voluntarism" rather than parasitic may be a more empathic usage. Similarly terms such has "war zone", "bull dozed", "capture" and many others add a sort of zest and sensationalism to what should be a more balanced relatively objective analysis. Perhaps it shows a youthful vigour in analysing the evidence as the "politics of confrontation" rather than the "politics of engagement". If these terms had been used by the informants that would have a different significance. But since they are mostly in your writings they do affect both a sense of objectivity and empathy.

C- Learnings for JSA

Finally can JSA learn or get anything out of this ethnography study.

There are many issues that you have raised through an effort to analyse conflicting narratives, that many of us in social activism in general and in our work including as members of JSA are aware off to a greater or lesser degree. having to deal with it at individual and collective level. However a detailed reading of your thesis does bring out these challenges and contradictions out into the open. As a mature movement and network we have been trying to address it and will continue to do so using also the provocation of your thesis. These challenges and contradictions include among others :

a) The ideological diversity /plurality of JSA

b) The power play and factionalism that may operate at different levels

c) The differences of experience and narratives between networks

d) The differences of experiences and narratives between the leadership of networks/resource centres and their own membership.

e) The presence or absence of democracy in decision making at all levels

f) The problems of representativeness, and inclusive networking at all levels

g) Trends, tendencies, conflict of stances and personality clashes and differences at all levels .

h) The changing levels of motivation, involvement among different constituencies in the JSA

i) The relationships, levels of democracy, engagement and power plays between the local, the regional, and the national.

j) The problems of ideological capture, elite capture, and other forms of divisive tendencies

k) The challenge of class, and caste in the hierarchical social situation of India. and its reflections in JSA

l) and others

These are known to many of us and over three decades many of us presently in JSA are addressing these at an individual institutional and networking level. Not withstanding these challenges – earlier mfc and now JSA since 2000AD have shown also a great degree of solidarity, collectivity and cohesiveness that has provided space for dissent, disagreement and dissent resulting in an ethos of trust, respect and camaraderie that is more obvious in the health activist community of India- which is difficult to explain in the terms of why and the wherefore?

Actually Sudhir, Ameya, Suresh, Lakshmanan, Shivanandan, Rajiv, Vish[illegible], Raghunathan, Babu, Chalapathi, Yashwant, Preeti, Ramakrishanan, and Adith[illegible] all belong to JSA and have participated actively in the efforts at building [illegible], campaigns, booklets, policy briefs, *jan sunwai's* and other activities. not withstanding differences in narratives and stances.

So while the narratives from them can be analysed in the context of power plays, hierarchy, adequacy of spaces for expression, purity, effectiveness etc they also need to be carefully analysed for strategies, trends and paradigms emerging through this collective engagement that makes JSA what it is. It would be useful to enquire into what holds it together and makes it continually expand.

We searched through your thesis and found many such observations and conclusions but they were all over the place, sometimes lost in controversy of conflicting narratives. Perhaps it may be a good idea to draw these out yourself so that your thesis is not only about contradictions but is also about new emerging paradigms of engagement and collective action.

Finally in trying to locate your study and its contribution in very specific terms we arrived at the following which perhaps would better explain what you seem to have managed to do. It might also reduce the expectations from what your readers and JSA members understand from your general description of the thesis!

Description of thesis :

General: An anthropological study of health activism in western India (Current Title)

Specific: An ethnographic account of a community of health activists in western India brought together by JAA - Maharastra with a focus on reality, representation, power, value, and hierarchy in the field of activism drawing upon narratives from a diversity of actors in JAA Maharastra. The study also tries to understand an interpret the challenges and the contradictions in the JSA universe particularly in the links between local and national.
The studies also an effort in analyzing activism by the study of narratives and controversies

Drs. Ravi and Thelma Narayan
CPHE, SOCHARA
Bangalore

10th December 2010

Re: Draft of PhD thesis on Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

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Dear Brendan,

Thank you for sending your draft thesis. It's good that your work is almost over and that it will reaach fruition soon. Thank you also for sending a draft out to concerned people in India.

I'm raising some issues of methodology below:

1. The amount of data that you would have collected during your two year field study doesn't reflect itself in the write-up. The quotes sound anecdotal and too general, which anyone could have picked up even within a few weeks of travel to a few organisations

2. I haven't fully understood the issue of anonymity /confidentiality. There's inconsistency as well: Some organisations and their histories are named, so it would take les than minute for someone to google the names of the two co-ordinators (the pseudonyms Ameya, Sudhir, Lakshmanan etc are hardly anonymous in that sense. Some friends from JNU have been openly named (in the section on payment of their airfares), whereas a couple of organisations have been given completely fictitious names; in one case, the interviewee who spoke at length about the pitfalls of the campaign has not even been given a pseudonym. Was there any discussion with people about how you would name them or how they would like to be named? I'm asking because I didn't find a mention of infomed consent in your draft thesis.

3. What has been the 'relative weight' of the quotations? What method did you use to draw out the commonalities, the particularities and the exceptionalities of the material you collected? I didn't find mention of cross-checks such as triangulation, the method of data-keeping, tables / narratives, diary-keeping etc.

I read that you have spent most of your time at SATHI in Pune, but to me, what stands out most vividly in your description is the physical (doughnut shaped) structure of the office, grocery shop conversation with someone, a few snippets with staff members and your strong impressions that are not factually substantiated. Surely you must have read numerous documents, attended their numerous meetings, observed the ways in which the organisation of campaign was being addressed; so I'm wondering how so many facts (evolution of SATHI, chronology of the campaign, NHRC related references, jan-sunwai issues etc) have been botched up. On the other hand, a couple or few (the draft doesn't mention the actual time spent) conversations with another group that you stumbled upon at a public meeting have been quoted beyond proportion. If you don't put issues in perspective - and through a rigorous analysis, you may be seen as being baised about the very group that you were supposed to know best The fleeting thoughts that passed my mind were: did familiarity breed contempt, did the researcher use someone else's shoulder to fire? You need to substantiate your inferences with data and findings which allow the reader to make her/his own inferences. Else, it will seem as though half way through you had made up your mind about what you wanted to say and that you fitted, re-fitted or selectively excluded data.

4. I fully appreciate theorising of field work - that's what a PhD is about, most times. Yet somehow I feel that ther has been too much straitjacketing of a very complex campaign - snipping off a limb here, padding a few organs there etc to fit it into the theories of very learned people no doubt, but still most of them being wise men from colonising nations. You mention feminist analysis in your latest response to some friends, but I don't see much of that in the thesis. In fact I feel that your work is rather distantly removed from feminist methodology. I alos feel that standpoint theory, James

Scott's work on hidden transcripts, Pierre Bourdieu's work on the relation between agency and structure etc could have been used more contextually.

5. Since you've mentioned feminist methodology, I would like to put out my feelings here: I feel that basic compassion or commitment to the campaign is lacking in the thesis. Does the researcher not change through the process of learning? Can s/he remain so unaffected that the judiciousness of contexting a reference is sometimes lost? When you use some good theorists to show how positing one's ideas as that of the masses has more appeal (Bourdieu on Gandhi, and on Godavaritai Parulekar, I think), did you delve enough to find out whether that was manipulative on behalf of the campaigners of the right to health campaign or whether it was because they claimed no 'personal copyright' on their work or ideas? You mention that there are no real 'people' in the campaign; now can that really be true? At the same time, when 'people' do participate in great numbers at the cost of personal safety in a jan-sunwai, you see that as instrumentalism. Did that really happen in the jan-suwais, mostly held by long-term local activist groups? Hardly any health-related campaigns are (or have been) entirely people-led, though in truth they should be. You need to posit your inferences within context - who are 'the people', when does someone cease to become 'people', what are the boundaries of middle-class (I'm not sure why the word elite features in your chapter) activism, what are the strengths and limitations of cadre based party-work on the one hand and externally funded campaigns on the other (with PILs and action-research / book writing falling loosely in between). Besides, these are not binaries. There is always some give and take - there could be someone from within a party structure who can collaborate with the government on a specific programme (and confront the state on other issues), and then there could be salaried staff members within an NGO-type structure who put in extra time and energy to volunteer. You condemn both without providing any theoretical relief or alternatives. While I agree that a PhD is a purely academic exercise, when one deals with a living and evolving organism like a campaign, there is some expectation from the researcher to also 'participate', if not to give. Here I see some ungracious taking and little giving: perhaps more respectful interaction with a momentous contemporary campaign, avoiding representation that borders on the risque - eg. 'warzone' between campaign factions, 'parasitic voluneerism', chessboard-like power games, sell-out to the state or funding agencies, positing campaigns (sex selection versus violence against women) against each other (most of us, including I have been part of both), using the inaccurate and heterogenous term 'Maharashtra' to represent one person / group's opinion etc. These terms, I feel are histrionic and immodest representations. While there certainly are moments of theatre, machination, power-play or unprincipled behaviour in every campaign, there is a way in which these have to be contextualised. Most campaign moments are rather mundane with back-breaking and monotonous work, they are filled with self-doubt and political losses; yet the sum-total is exhilarating because of the innovations, impact and the ways in which people give the campaign a fresh meaning and life. If only you could have avoided the temptation of sticking to a somewhat cynical and morose tone a bit....

6. There needs to be a modest self-doubt about the reliability of findings when most of the ethnographic field work is done through amateur local translators or by researchers with very little understanding of nuances, especially of the 'people'. This is also true of most urban or non-tribal researchers in India. Did English conversations with city-based people sit better with you because you understood them more than the body language, dialect, hidden transcripts of non-English speaking or rural / tribal people? Did your being an outsider (non-tribal, elite/ middle-class, transient traveller, non-campaigner, non party-person, foreigner, researcher, male etc) not affect any of your data? I'd like to see not only a mention, but also an analysis of how reality was shaped and affected by your presence. I'm saying this because if gross gaps and accuracy can creep in even when dealing with well-documented and printed material in English (chronology, events etc, mentioned by me above); the basis on which you theorise on more complex field work data is a bit precarious, isn't it? All of us have to be constantly reminded of our limitations when we, as researchers from the outside make claims about 'reality' through vignettes that we observe.

7. More conversations, observations, dialogue and discussions with activists (Kashtakari Sanghatana, Shramik Mukti Dal, the Mitanins, health workers in Bangalore etc) were needed in order to show the impact of the JSA/ JAA/ PHM and related campaigns at the grassroots and to fill out the contours that you have drawn out.

8. Lastly, the power of the researcher, his/her access to publishing his/her standpoint in respectable journals and institutions, the access to resources of time, money, education and the privilege of ethnographers / anthropologists to study phenomena in 'developing' countries (especially those with a history of colonisation) needs to be acknowledged, not merely on one page, but throughout the work.

The burden of all that I have said above obviously cannot be borne by you at this stage of the thesis. Neither are you obliged to accept any of my / our feedback in your thesis, as it is your work and bears your mark. Nonetheless.....

With best wishes for your degree and with regards,
manisha

BRENDAN DONEGAN
(DRAFT MANUSCRIPT)
OF PhD Study

An anthropological study of health activism in western India

Draft of a doctoral thesis submitted to Professor David Mosse on 19 November 2010.

by Brendan Donegan, doctoral candidate in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

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+ Comments by JSA Folk including RN/TN

RN
5/1/2011

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Contents 2
Contents 3
Abstract 5
Acknowledgments 7
Abbreviations and Acronyms 9
Glossary 10
1. Introduction 10
Introduction 14
1. Categories of Activism 17
2. Theoretical Approach 23
3. Methodology 29
4. Structure of the thesis 31
2. History: The field of social action in colonial and postcolonial India 31
Introduction 32
1. Mission and Social Reform 34
2. Nationalist Movement 36
3. The Nehruvian Golden Age 38
4. Narratives of the 70s and 80s 44
5. New Health Movements 49
Conclusion 51
3. "Rashomon": Histories of the Jan Swasthya Sabha (People's Health Assembly) 51
Introduction 52
1. Origins 58
2. Kolkata 64
3. Other Actors 68
4. Voluntarism: The Pure Gift and Dirty Money 68
Introduction 71
1. A Hierarchy of Gifts 77
2. The Pure Gift and Parasitic Voluntarism 81
3. The poison in the gift 87
5. Collectives: Networks, inertia and the performance of groups 87
Introduction 89
1. JSA as network 93
2. JSA as organisation 99
3. JSA as performance 104
Conclusion 106
6. Engagements: Inside or outside when the government changes 106
Introduction 107
1. The Right to Healthcare Campaign 114
2. National Rural Health Mission 121
3. Agencies 125
Conclusion 130
Appendix 137
Bibliography

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic account of a community of activists in western India. Taking as its focus the relationship between reality and representation in the field of activism, the thesis develops new ways of analysing activism by drawing on contemporary scholarship on the study of narratives and controversy. Fieldwork over 20 months (2007-2009) was multi-sited. Although much of it was carried out in the city of Pune and *adivasi* (tribal) areas of Thane district in the state of Maharashtra, the thesis focuses on the national and international connections of activists based at these sites, in particular their links with the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (People's Health Movement).

The thesis is concerned with the practices of activists in relation to other activists. It explores how the narratives of activists about each other are mutually determined, describing the framework within which this mutual definition takes place as an 'economy of stances'. The thesis examines the way in which these narratives are productive and useful for their narrators. Each chapter uses specific ethnographic data to develop this argument, documenting the activists' rights-based campaign work, their involvement with the government's National Rural Health Mission, and the distinctions they make between different types of social action. Each chapter finds different ways to problematise the categories used by activists, and examines how activists are constantly engaged in the work of managing the boundaries between the following: funded activities and actors versus voluntary ones; working with or against the government; service delivery versus campaign activities. Managing the boundaries between these categories is crucial to the activists: their ability to do what they do depends on it. This thesis challenges the idea that activist categories are peripheral to activism or can be taken for granted, and shows they are central to how activism works.

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The higher up the tree the monkey climbs, the more you see his ass.

(A proverb included in an African activist's report of the second international People's Health Assembly in Cuenca in 2005)

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Acknowledgments

This research was made possible by an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 1+3 award.[1]

In India, my greatest debt is to those men and women who allowed me into their lives, offering me not only data for this thesis but food, friendship, important life lessons and crucial assistance with the logistics of multi-sited fieldwork. Abhay Shukla, Anant Phadke, Dhananjay Kakde, Bhagyashree Khaire, Nitin Jadhav and the rest of the SATHI team very generously gave me a secure base throughout my research, welcomed me into their office, their city and their networks, and provided me with *chai*, *pohe* and laughter. In Dahanu, Brian Lobo, Shiraj Balsara, Deepak Abnave and the *karyakartas* of Kashtakari Sanghatna were my guides and teachers at the steepest point in my learning curve, and introduced a new world to me. Ravi Narayan, Thelma Narayan, Victor Fernandes, and others at CHC helped me find a breathing space in Bangalore when I was struggling to make sense of my research project and figure out the focus of my remaining fieldwork. Elsewhere in India, Ajay Khare, Dharmendra Kumar, Devika Biswas, Suhas Kolhekar were all key in offering care and helping me get a lot out of brief encounters with activists in different sites. Neeti Badwe and Aparna Jha both provided vital support in addition to language training in my first months in Pune, and I am grateful to Mukesh Choudhari and Meena Dhodade for their assistance as interpreters in Thane.

In the course of my fieldwork I made a number of friendships which helped me survive the sometimes painful process of research. Shailesh Dikhale, Malavika Jha, Kalyani Jha, Samrat Shirvalkar, Abhinand Jha, Krishnakumar, Zohar Perla, Ravi Kadam, Kishor Waghmare and Sangeeta Gandhe made Pune a home for me; elsewhere, Priyanka Vegad, Amulya Nidhi, Vinay Viswanatha, Deepak Kumaraswamy and Pradeep Waghmare offered camaraderie.

During my fieldwork in India I was affiliated to Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. I thank those at TISS who supported me during my stay in India, in particular my research guides Ramila Bisht and Denzil Saldanha, but also Neela Dabir and Shalini Bharat.

In the UK, I am grateful to Ben Rosamond, Miranda Allison, Maja Zehfuss and Jan Aart Scholte at the University of Warwick for their contributions to my research at its earliest stages; special thanks go to Ben Rosamond for his support and assistance in my application for the ESRC 1+3 award, and to the Department of Politics and International Studies as a whole for permitting me to transfer to SOAS with the +3 component of the award after completing my Masters at Warwick.

At SOAS my greatest debt is to my supervisor David Mosse, whose efforts have left me with nothing to contribute to the conversations PhD students have about the lacks and lacunae of their supervision; his involvement in this project has been committed and painstaking from start to finish. My second supervisor Kit Davis has been a great foil to David, offering complementary insights and approaches to supervision. In the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Paru Raman and Ed Simpson have offered me thoughtful comments on two of my chapters, Lola Martinez, Johan Pottier and Trevor Marchand have all offered pastoral care, and the friendship and support of fellow PhD

[1] This research project was completed with the support of ESRC 1+3 award PTA-031-2005-00345.

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students – in particular Giulia Battaglia, Alice Tilche, Roberta Zavoretti and our 'honorary member' Wim Van Daele – has made a world of difference to me. I am also grateful to the members of ASAR (Academics and Students Against Repression) and the Marxist Reading Group, and all the activists at SOAS who helped me find my feet after returning to the UK from India. Without the love, care and encouragement of my parents Michael and Cathy and my sister Fiona I would not be where I am today. Although it has proved beyond the scope of this thesis to address the importance of the social reproduction of the activist, Sameena has contributed more to this thesis and to the life of its author than either of us could ever have imagined, in more ways than I could ever have imagined; I cannot thank her enough.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AITUC	All India Trade Union Congress (affiliated to CPI)
ACHAN	Asian Community Health Action Network
AID-India	Association for Indian Development, India
AIDWA	All India Democratic Women's Association
AIPSN	All India Peoples Science Network
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
BGVS	Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party)
BNHRA	Bombay Nursing Home Regulation Act
CEHAT	Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes, Mumbai
CHAI	Catholic Health Association of India
CHC	Community Health Cell, Bangalore
CI	Consumer International
CMAI	Christian Medical Association of India
CMM	Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (Movement for the liberation of Chhattisgarh)
CMSS	Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (Association of Mine Workers of Chhattisgarh)
CPHC	Comprehensive Primary Health Care
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party of India – Marxist
CSDS	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
CSMCH	Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU
DG	Director-General
DHF	Dag Hammarskjold Foundation
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
FCTC	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FIDA	Finnish Development Cooperation Organisation
FMRAI	Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives' Associations of India
FORCES	Forum for Creche and Child Care Services
FRCH	Foundation for Research in Community Health, Mumbai
GK	Gonoshasthaya Kendra, Bangladesh
HAI AP	Health Action International – Asia Pacific
IBFAN	International Baby Food Action Network
ICMR	Indian Council of Medical Research
ICSSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
IPHC	International People's Health Council
IPHN	International Poverty and Health Network
IPHU	International People's Health University
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress (affiliated to the Indian National Congress)
JAA	Jan Arogya Abhiyan (People's Health Movement Maharashtra)
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi
JP	Jayaprakash Narayan
JSA	Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (People's Health Movement)
JSS	Jan Swasthya Sabha (People's Health Assembly, referring to National Health Assembly)
JWP	Joint Women's Programme
KSSP	Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad

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MAHILA	A Pune-based women's organisation (name changed)
MFC	Medico Friends Circle
MMA	Medical Missionary Association
NANI	National Alliance for Nutrition for Infants
NAPM	National Alliance of People's Movements
NAWO	National Alliance of Women's Organisations
NCC	National Coordination Committee
NFIW	National Federation of Indian Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
PHA	People's Health Assembly
PHM	People's Health Movement
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers Society)
RKM	Ramakrishna Mission
RTHC	Right to Healthcare campaign
SATHI	Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives, Pune
SOCHARA	Society for Community Health, Awareness and Research Action, Bangalore
SSP	Sardar Sarovar dam project
TNSF	Tamil Nadu Science Forum
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VHAI	Voluntary Health Association of India
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad (Universal Hindu Association)
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Glossary

Adivasi	Tribal
Bhai/Bhau	Brother (Hindi/Marathi)
Jan Sangathan	People's Organisation, People's Movement (Hindi)
Karyakarta	Activist (Hindi/Marathi)
Pyag	Sacrifice (Marathi)
Sanghatna	People's Organisation, People's Movement (Marathi)
Seva	Public Service (Hindi)
Tai	Sister (Marathi)

Chai
pahe

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1. Introduction

Introduction

> We the people of India, stand united in our condemnation of an iniquitous global system that, under the garb of 'Globalisation' seeks to heap unprecedented misery and destitution on the overwhelming majority of the people on this globe. This system has systematically ravaged the economies of poor nations in order to extract profits that nurture a handful of powerful nations and corporations. The poor, across the globe, as well as the sections of poor in the rich nations, are being further marginalised as they are displaced from home and hearth and alienated from their sources of livelihood as a result of the forces unleashed by this system. Standing in firm opposition to such a system we reaffirm our inalienable right to and demand for comprehensive health care that includes food security; sustainable livelihood options including secure employment opportunities; access to housing, drinking water and sanitation; and appropriate medical care for all; in sum – the right to **Health For All, Now!** (Opening paragraph of the *Indian People's Health Charter* (JSA 2000: 1))

This thesis is an anthropological study of health activism in western India. The concept of health activism is used to refer to social action aimed at improving the health of 'the people'. Although much of the data collection for this thesis took place in and out of the city of Pune and *adivasi* (tribal) areas of Thane district in the state of Maharashtra, the focus of the study is the national and international connections of a community[2] of activists based at these sites. The aim of the thesis is to understand this community in terms of their connections to the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (JSA) (Hindi: People's Health Movement), a national network of health activists, and the international People's Health Movement (PHM). The JSA website describes the JSA as "a growing coalition of people's organisations, civil society organisations, NGOs [nongovernmental organisations], social activists, health professionals, academics and researchers that endorse the Indian People's Health Charter and the People's Charter for Health" (JSA n.d.: unpaginated). The key question this thesis attempts to answer through this case study is: what is the relationship between reality and representation in the field of activism? In my response to this question I try to develop new ways of analysing activism by drawing on contemporary work on the analysis of narratives and controversy.

Many of the classic ethnographic monographs begin with a 'tour of the village' (refs). While there are plenty of anthropologists who still study village societies in the manner pioneered by the first social anthropologists (refs) and plenty more who strongly advocate that doctoral students should study a village society as their first piece of research even if they go on to study very different communities later in their career,[3] many doctoral students, including myself, did not heed this advice. I explain how I conducted my fieldwork later in this chapter; here I wish to introduce the reader to the community I studied in a fashion which draws upon the literary style of the functionalist anthropologist's introduction (refs to Geertz and Clifford) and, in doing so, illustrates the differences.

My time in the village began when I planned my first visit to India in 2005, before I was even aware that I was going to do a PhD in anthropology. My girlfriend had contacts in two health NGOs based in western Maharashtra, CEHAT (Centre for Enquiry into Health

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[2] I consider my informants as belonging to a 'community of practice' (see Wenger, cited in Copeman 2009: 14).

[3] In an oft-cited article on multi-sited ethnography, George Marcus offers a number of reasons for this kind of attitude (Marcus 1995).

and Allied Themes) and MASUM (Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal, Marathi: Women's Holistic Uplift Association). She suggested I write to them and arrange to spend time with these organisations. Kamayani Bali of CEHAT told me I could begin by taking part in a Health and Human Rights course CEHAT was running at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) campus in Mumbai. When I began to develop my PhD project one year later, it was my experiences in that visit to India that shaped my research proposal in terms of the politics of health (see the appendix of this thesis).

At the start of my fieldwork in 2007 I travelled to Pune, where the national secretariat of JSA was housed with the NGO SATHI (Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives). I met Dr Sudhir,[4] who had read my research proposal. "How flexible is this?" he asked. "And how do you propose to do it?" He explained to me that JSA is not a people's movement "where that's all they do"; it is a network comprising "lots of organisations mainly engaged in other work, and maybe 5% of their activities are JSA-related; [JSA] work is not constant, right now is a lull, most organisations getting on with other activities" (Fieldnotes).[5] He said that I would need to get a sense of the diversity of organisations involved. A week later, another member of JSA told me that I would need to go to "the grassroots", where JSA was involved in helping people become aware of their rights in relation to health and collecting data that could be used both in advocacy efforts locally and in lobbying on policy issues at state and national level. "That's what you need to study as an anthropologist, that's why you need the local language," she said. "Because you can talk to us, the national organisers, but we're all the elite, you know, elite education etc. JSA is the grassroots" (Fieldnotes). Meeting a third member of JSA soon after, I repeated the suggestion that JSA is the grassroots. He looked amused. "Is it?" he said.

To my mind, these ethnographic moments serve as illustrations of the practical conditions of my fieldwork and of the theoretical problematic I initially struggled with and finally took as the key idea around which my thesis is structured: the idea that activists disagree with each other, and that these disagreements can be productive.

These disagreements are largely responsible for the absence of a common definition of 'activism' (Gellner 2010a, other refs). Gellner points out that "'activist' is a highly appraisive term, so that one person's activist is another's self-interested glory-hunter" (Gellner 2010b: 3),[6] but it is also the case that different people use the concept itself in very different ways, so that for some it has a positive connotation whereas for others it is a highly pejorative label. Activism is an "essentially contested concept" (Gallie 1964: page ref from Chandhoke 2003), as is the related concept of civil society (Chandhoke 2003 ref).[7] It will become clear in this introductory chapter that I take the contestation of both these concepts as an important aspect of the object of study, and yet in order to pin down what I am studying it is necessary to adopt some kind of definition or at least

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[4] Most names in this thesis have been changed in order to protect my informants.

[5] In the informant quotes I use in my thesis I differentiate between Fieldnotes, Notes from interview and Interview transcript, using the first to refer to things said in the course of an informal conversation, the second to refer to notes taken during a formal interview, and the third to refer to extracts from a verbatim transcript of the interview.

[6] Gellner makes this point in the context of a discussion of radical activists (he refers to Mehda Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan as an example), in which he suggests that a "common accusation" radical activists level at "well-paid employees of internationally funded NGOs" is that they "are just 'doing a job' and cannot be considered activists" (2010b: 3).

[7] See Gellner and Karki (2010: 136-137), Lewis (2010: 160) for other definitions of activism that don't suit my purposes.

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acknowledge the set of definitions with which I am concerned. I use 'activist' to refer to individuals actively involved in efforts to change society in some way based on ideas about what they think is wrong with society and needs to be changed, and what would be a preferable state of affairs.[8] For my purposes, 'actively involved' means the individual is involved in some kind of organising, of 'making things happen', so that an individual who takes part in organising a petition or protest is an activist, but an individual whose only action is to sign the petition or attend the protest is not an activist. Most (if not all) of those I refer to as activists are not 'full-timers' involved only in activism, but "move in and out of 'activism' and 'activist modes'" (Heaton Shrestha 2010: 210), with the majority of their time necessarily devoted to income-generating activities such as farming or work as a medical or development professional. Finally, in contrast with many other definitions of activism, I do not exclude from my definition party activists, in agreement with Gellner that doing so would leave "a curious gap in any account that starts from people and processes on the ground" (2010b: 10).

My reason for adopting this definition of activism in my thesis is that it is productive for an analysis of the particular set of practices which I observed within the community of activists with whom I conducted my fieldwork. I observed that many of my informants were constantly engaged in the work of managing the perceived distance between activities and actors that are paid as opposed to voluntary, working with or against the government, or focused on service delivery as compared with campaign work. I interpret this set of practices as indicating that within this community there is a need to both maintain and overcome a certain distance between different types of action, different types of work, and different types of actor, and my thesis links this need with the conditions faced by this community of activists and examines how they respond to this need.

A minimal indication of the conditions they face can be achieved by providing two definitions of civil society. Lewis (2002: 572, 2010: 171) points out that although there is little agreement on the meaning of civil society in contemporary discussions of this concept, two basic understandings can be identified: the 'liberal' and the 'radical'. The liberal view favoured by governments, donor agencies and international lending institutions has much in common with the analysis of de Tocqueville (1835 [1966]), seeing civil society as a sphere of citizen action organised for non-economic purposes, a 'third sector' that balances the state and market and is, as such, a key component of the 'good governance' agenda. In contrast, the radical view favoured by some activists owes more to Marxist approaches, in particular the conceptual framework used by Gramsci (1971) to analyse what he called "advanced societies". For Gramsci, the ruling class seeks to dominate civil society through cultural hegemony, the process by which the oppressed come to accept as 'common sense' the ideology that justifies the status quo. Those who seek to overthrow the ruling class must work towards countering this hegemony by fighting a 'war of position', a cultural trench warfare that takes place over the terrain of civil society and enables the oppressed to recognise themselves as a class and prompts them to action and the seizure of state power.

In my thesis I argue that both these conflicting views of civil society are in circulation among my informants, and that many of them see themselves and present themselves as members of civil society according to both views rather than one or the other. On the one

[8] A less convoluted way of saying the same thing comes from Gellner and Karki (2007), who define activism as "the practice of campaigning to remake the world in line with a consciously articulated programme" (2007: 361).

hand they think of and present themselves as members of a 'third sector' counter-balancing the state and acting as a watchdog, and on the other hand they think of and present themselves as participants in a war of position, 'using' the organisational forms made available by the ruling class – i.e. funded NGOs – against the ruling class, by using donor funding to build both the class consciousness and organisational strength of the new class. I argue that many of my informants are to some extent right to think of themselves in these terms, i.e. both the liberal and radical views of civil society do provide at least partially accurate accounts of their practices. It is partially accurate to think of them as adopting a rights-based approach to health focused on the liberal democratic state as guarantor of rights. At the same time it is also partially accurate to think of them as distancing themselves from such an approach on the basis of an analysis that sees the state apparatus as dominated by the ruling class and unlikely to respect the rights of the oppressed unless forced to do so by mobilisations of the oppressed and their supporters. In this analysis, the concept of health becomes what Ernesto Laclau (ref) refers to as an 'empty signifier': a concept which enables "everybody [to find] something in it for themselves", as Dr Suresh[9] of Delhi Science Forum put it, with the result that health serves as "an entry point for a larger social mobilisation on social issues" (Interview transcript).

I argue that it is productive to consider the ways in which my informants' self-presentation as members of civil society according to both views is useful for them. My central interest in this thesis is in how these two views of civil society come together in the world of a group of actors who straddle both, in how the tension between these two views is reconciled or made use of in my informants' practice. My guiding concern is with the ways in which actors deal with the tension, contradiction and conflict between these two views. I argue that when individuals or organisations present themselves as counter-hegemonic and other individuals or organisations as hegemonic we need to analyse the productive power of such representations rather than judge them as being either true or false.

I argue that a researcher such as myself is ultimately not in a position of being able to judge whether these individuals or organisations are truly hegemonic or counter-hegemonic. What researchers can contribute is an additional layer of analysis beyond the analysis of the actors themselves by looking at how their narratives, their representations of themselves and their rivals, are mutually constitutive and only make sense in relation to each other and to the range of stances made possible by the economy of stances in the political field at the time. Thus my thesis is a study of activism and a study of civil society in practice. In particular, it is a study of the way actors make use of the categories and concepts of activism and civil society in their practice, and in this sense my research responds to the archetypal question of anthropological research: why do these people do what they do?

While my central focus is on practices associated with activism, I conducted fieldwork with a community of health activists, and therefore one aspect of the thesis is an exploration of the differences and continuities between health activism and other forms of activism. I argue that the tendency for individuals with medical training to play a leading role in the initiatives of this activist community does to some extent differentiate their activism from other forms, but at the same time there are important similarities in

[9] Name changed.

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the practices of health activists and other activists in India that I seek to make sense of in the context of the influences they have in common.

The remainder of this chapter expands upon and develops an account of this problematic. The first section describes how I frame my research topic in terms of categories of activism. The second section introduces the theoretical frameworks of Bruno Latour and Pierre Bourdieu which I have used in my study. The third section describes my methodology. The fourth section introduces the structure of the thesis and content of my chapters.

1. Categories of Activism

From the moment of the Russian revolution onwards, political discussion and action across the world has been marked by the opposition between capitalism and socialism (Sader 2004: 257). After the Second World War, this dichotomy polarised ways of thinking about how social life should be organised in terms of two models which might be described as state capitalism and state socialism. However, by the 1960s a critical mass of disillusionment had built up with both models because neither seemed to have fulfilled their promises, especially in the countries of the so-called South – countries previously designated by the terms 'Third World' or 'developing countries' -- where neither of these models had succeeded in setting in motion "processes of social change...that ensured material well-being to large numbers and were both participatory and humane" (Wignaraja 1993: 4).

Forms of activism grew up in response to the perceived failures of both models. In a useful typology, Wallerstein (2004) divides these new forms into four categories: Maoism, new social movements, human rights organisations and anti-globalisation movements. These four tendencies differed in their critiques of the two dominant models, but had one thing in common: all of them had to some extent lost faith in the state as a social actor and instead looked to 'the people' – a figure that came to be seen as a replacement for Marx's vision of the working-class as the major protagonist in the struggle, in a world in which "the working-class had sold out and allied with the capitalist class and the only true revolutionaries were nonworking-class students, women, Third World minorities, and peasants" (Cleaver 1979: page ref). The "multiple Maoisms" (Wallerstein 2004: 267) of the 1960s and 1970s all claimed the Cultural Revolution in China as inspiration, distance from state socialism in the USSR, and the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class. In contrast, the new social movements were so-called partly because each focused their efforts on some category of oppression other than class, and partly because unlike the national liberation movements that had come up in the countries of the South in the past these movements had goals other than seizing state power – often their primary concern was that the state and society should change its approach towards, for example, women, dalits, or the environment. Human rights organisations became prominent from the 1960s onwards as organisations seeking to get states and international institutions to expand and make good on their commitments to protect the rights of individuals and communities, through lobbying, monitoring state practices, and building actions and campaigns on particular cases of rights violations.

Wallerstein's first three categories are mainly oriented towards making changes in particular states. In contrast, the anti-globalisation movements are oriented towards the consequences of a set of processes labelled as corporate globalisation or neoliberal globalisation. Almost all accounts of these movements begin by pointing out that the

term 'anti-globalisation' was coined by the mainstream media rather than these movements themselves, and that in fact many within these movements are not against globalisation and might be more accurately described as *for* global social justice.[10] Many are also members of one of Wallerstein's other categories but come together in common struggle on this issue, while retaining their own agendas and maintaining "a common respect for each other's immediate priorities" (Wallerstein 2004: 271). The anti-globalisation label has stuck because of the way many of the individuals and groups coming together in protests were no longer identifying particular governments as solely to blame, but seeing their problems "as the local effects of a particular global ideology, one enforced by national politicians but conceived of centrally by a handful of corporate interests and international institutions" (Klein 2002: xv). Of the four tendencies, only the Maoists have shown an interest in seizing state power; the new social movements, human rights organisations and anti-globalisation movements all aspire to bring social change by building 'countervailing power' (Wignaraja 1993: 12).

If Wallerstein's categories are useful in a limited way as a tool for making sense of some of the diversity of tendencies and labels that have emerged since the 1960s, they also provide an insight into the immediate problem faced by any attempt to categorise activism in this period (or in any period, for that matter): the categories are not watertight at all. In describing what is 'new' about the new social movements, Wallerstein (like many others) relies on a contrast with the so-called 'old' social movements of the 'traditional Left', understood to focus their attentions on organising the industrial working class in hierarchical, bureaucratic organisations linked with parties – but in fact many of the new social movements have linked with parties (e.g. the dalit movement in India (Omvedt 1993)), and many groups within the labour movement have adapted their organisational approach in light of their analysis of globalisation (Mayo 2005: 74, 87-90). Many (if not most) new social movements have not abandoned class, but take it into consideration alongside some other category (for example gender, in the case of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India (Mayo 2005: 85-6). Many scholars attempting to categorise the new forms of activism make a distinction between political and non-political work (or between politics and social work, radical and status quo-ist activities, or human rights campaigning and service delivery) that "ignores the fact that groups often engage in constructive work [as opposed to confrontational tactics] precisely in order to challenge the hegemonic 'truths' propagated by official state ideologies" (Jenkins 2010: 416; see also Heaton Shrestha 2010: 209).

Most of the attempts at formulating categories of activism do so with the intention – often made explicit – of valorising one category and putting down others. Perhaps more visibly than in other areas of research, "research in this field to a large extent has been the continuation of politics by other means" (Tvedt 2004: 135), and many have argued that this research literature "has generally been theoretically weakened by its overwhelming focus on normative agendas" (Lewis 2010: 168). Most obviously, new social movements are contrasted with old social movements, and seen to offer ways of moving beyond the impasse arrived at by the latter (Mayo 2005: 73). Wignaraja acknowledges that "Not all new social movements are positive" and that in the global South religious fundamentalisms also "provide a critique of Western notions of development and democracy" that is attractive to "alienated people" (1993: 5n2) – but this acknowledgment comes in a footnote and he emphasises that manipulative, highly

[10] The list of names by which these movements have been referred to is long, and includes 'alter-globalisation movements', 'anti-capitalist movements', 'anti-neoliberalism movements', 'newest social movements' (Day 2005), and the 'movement of movements' (Mertes 2004).

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centralised and repressive organisations are "not the direct concern" of his chapter (1993: 5).[11] In the Indian context, NGOs "are frequently located conceptually within more than just one dichotomy [...] depending on who is doing the defining, there are any number of things that NGOs are not" (Jenkins 2010: 409-10), including political parties, trade unions, social movements, religious organisations or community-based organisations, and they may be compared favourably or unfavourably with any of these. Perhaps the 'big' category that many of these other categories are often seen as falling into is civil society, but the enthusiasm with which the concept of 'civil society' has been adopted by the international development industry (Jenkins 2001) has been a contributing factor in its rejection by some activists, leading David Gellner (2010b) to ask "[d]o 'civil society' and 'activism' in fact designate the same social reality?" given that "[r]adical activists often claim that the terms 'civil society' and 'the Third Sector' are the language of activists who have abandoned social movements" (2010b: 2).

Most activists and researchers of activism are not blind to the limitations of the categories they set up. Many draw attention to the fact that these categories do not fit the reality very well, often by describing the boundary between categories – for example, the boundary between state and society, or between state and civil society – as 'blurred' (Gupta 1995; Fuller and Harriss 2001: 15; Lewis 2006; Jervis-Read 2006). There has been debate on the relevance of Western concepts such as 'civil society' in non-Western societies (Blaney and Pasha 1993; Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001; Lewis 2001). Many also acknowledge that "the studies and theoretical positions of intellectuals [...] [are] part of the ongoing ideological debate in and about the movements" (Omvedt 1993: xiii), conditioned by the social position of those intellectuals. Despite these acknowledgments, most of these analysts still start by setting up categories (or rejecting existing categories and demanding new ones), apparently under the assumption – often made explicit – that it is necessary to do so before analysis begins.

In this thesis I make the case for an alternative way of proceeding, a form of analysis that starts by examining the categories the actors themselves set up, asking how and for whom they are 'useful' (Lewis 2001: 11). I draw on relational approaches to social analysis that deny the possibility of any identities or categories existing in and of themselves, arguing that all identities and categories must be understood as produced through social relationships, and that all social relationships require boundary maintenance and the necessary fictions of categories and boundaries between them. Rather than starting by defining state and society as two categories and then declaring the boundary between them 'blurred', for example, relational approaches would instead ask the following questions. How are these categories and the boundary between them produced? Which actors are involved in this production, and what are the consequences – for whom is this production 'productive', and how? Rather than taking civil society to be a space in which particular actors are located, I am interested in the processes by which civil society is *constituted* as a space, and how this has changed over time. Many analysts of civil society start, like Wallerstein, by stating that civil society includes a variety of types of actor and then constructing a typology of these actors (see refs). Many others, like Wignaraja, start by defining the type of actor they are interested in analysing, and contrasting them favourably or unfavourably with some other category or categories (see Kamat 2002; Jenkins 2010: 416). I am interested in the work actors do to differentiate themselves from other actors, and my analysis is concerned with three key questions.

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[11] Sangeeta Kamat also resorts to a footnote to mention that JP Narayan "consented to the participation of Hindu right-wing organisations" in his student movement (see the History chapter of my thesis) – although she also claims that she takes up this issue in her chapter 4 (2002: 12n11).

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First, how are these identities and boundaries maintained? Second, what consequences follow from this work – that is, what is achieved by it, what is at stake? Third, how can the account generated by such a form of analysis be useful for actors?

I do not wish to claim that the approach I adopt is mine alone; it is not, but I would suggest that attempts to ask these questions in relation to activism are relatively recent and still few and far between. Existing scholarship includes Kim Fortun's study of 'advocacy after Bhopal' (2001), Annelise Riles' work on human rights networks in the Pacific (2001), David Lewis's work on the biographies of individuals who have worked in both the government and the 'Third Sector' (2006), an edited collection published by David Gellner this year (2010a), an insightful book chapter by Rob Jenkins (2010), a workshop on 'ethnographies of activism' at LSE in 2009, and David Mosse's ongoing research on Dalit politics in India. In my thesis I engage with these writings, building on the insights they offer in my attempts to add my own contribution to this emerging analytical approach. In the following section I draw on these works in sketching the theoretical approach I adopt in my thesis.

2. Theoretical Approach

When I left the UK for India I did so with the intention of investigating the politics of health through a case study of the JSA as a community of health activists. My interest in categories and the politics of classification emerged when I observed that within the JSA there was no consensus on what JSA is, how it can be differentiated from what it is not, its relationships with other actors, how JSA's members can be differentiated from each other, or their relationships with each other. Some of my informants pointed out to me early on that this is what I would find, one suggesting that through my interviews I would "get a *Rashomon*-kind of a rendering of how we see the JSA as individuals" (Interview transcript).

The film *Rashomon* provides a useful point of comparison with the problem I am trying to tackle here, which is of course a familiar problem in anthropology: how do we deal with the fact that different people tell us different things?[12] *Rashomon* presents four narratives of a set of events which leads to a sexual encounter that may be rape, and a death that is either murder or suicide. Each narrative is told from the perspective of a different narrator, and the audience comes to understand that there are at least two possible reasons for the differences between the narratives: first, because each narrator observed the set of events from a different position, and second, because each narrator has a stake in their narrative being accepted as the truth – for each of them, their own narrative is the one that minimises the shame and humiliation caused to them by the events. Unlike many other films in the tradition of detective investigation, *Rashomon* does not conclude by making clear to the audience which narrative is true, leaving them instead to judge for themselves. Both these options are available to an anthropological analysis: the researcher can decide which narrative they think is true and present that one, or, in keeping with a postmodern emphasis on the endless multiplicity of actor perspectives, present several narratives without favouring any one of them. The first option involves a focus on reality, the second option involves a focus on how actors represent reality. But there is also a third option, which is to focus on the relationship between reality and its representations. It is this third option that I have emphasised in my

[12] *Rashomon* has been invoked by anthropologists (Heider 1988) as well as by other scholars (Allison 1971) in discussions of the nature of social science research.

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thesis, because, I argue, the relationship between reality and its representations is crucial to how activism works.

I have found the work of Bruno Latour (1983, 1988, 1993, 1996, 2003, 2005) and Pierre Bourdieu (1991) particularly useful for thinking this through, and will take some time here to introduce the way I interpret their thought in this thesis. While ostensibly these two theorists speak from very different positions – Latour in particular emphasises their difference, devoting considerable energy in *Reassembling the Social* (refs) to taking potshots at Bourdieu – I find that on this question of the politics of classification their approaches are quite complementary to each other. Both of them are critical of social science that starts from the assumption that groups already exist, and argue for an approach that focuses on how groups are made to exist.

In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), Bourdieu presents a particular interpretation of the relationship between political representation – "[t]he delegation through which one person gives power, as the saying goes, to another" (1991: 203) – and the representation of reality, of what exists. Bourdieu argues that although it appears that the spokesperson is created by the group who delegates to him the power to speak in their place, "*in reality* it is more or less just as true to say that it is the spokesperson who creates the group" (1991: 204), that the group exists because the spokesperson represents it. Thus the relationship between a group and spokesperson is circular: the spokesperson's act of representation brings the represented into existence, and in return the represented "gives existence to its representative as the representative of a group" (Bourdieu 1991: 204). Bourdieu describes the representative's power as symbolic power, "a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself" (1991: 170). Symbolic power is of particular importance in the political field "understood both as a field of forces and as a field of struggles aimed at transforming the relation of forces which confers on this field its structure at any given moment" (1991: 171); for Bourdieu, the political field is "the site *par excellence* in which agents seek to form and transform their visions of the world and thereby the world itself...the site *par excellence* in which words are actions" (Thompson 1991: 26).

A relevant example might serve to make this argument clearer. The *adivasis* (tribals)[13] of Thane district belong to a number of tribes, the main ones being the Kolis, Bhils, Katkaris, Thakurs and Warlis. The *adivasis* differentiate themselves by tribe; for example, many of the tribes see themselves as superior to the Katkaris, who are considered unclean. Since the 1940s a number of activists have attempted to organise the *adivasis* of Thane district. Denzil Saldanha (1984) has studied the efforts of Godavari Parulekar and the Kisan Sabha (Hindi: Farmers' Council) in this regard, framing his analysis in terms of Lukacs' (1971) concept of class consciousness. Bourdieu would argue that the problem with the question of the "awakening of consciousness" is that it contributes to the concealment of the "original circle of representation" (Bourdieu 1991: 204) by encouraging us to view the class as something that already exists, that has reality, prior to the social scientist identifying it in theory and the activist working with its members so that they become conscious of themselves as a class and effectively mobilise as such. Bourdieu contends that the danger with such a view is that it leads one to overlook "the symbolic struggles…where what is at stake is the very representation of

[13] Like many of those who have written about this community, I prefer to use the term adivasi because that is how they refer to themselves (Munshi 2007: 1). Of course there is a political logic to the use of this term which is an intricate part of the argument I am making here.

the social world" (Bourdieu 1991: 229). For Bourdieu, an important aspect of Parulekar's work is her struggle to persuade the *adivasis* to think of themselves as *adivasis* rather than, for example, Warlis and Katkaris, men and women (Mehta 1999), Hindus (Hansen 1999: 104-7), as part of the Maharashtrian nation (Benei 2001) or as part of the Indian nation. As such, she contributes to the process of bringing into existence a particular category of which she becomes the political representative.

This question of the relation between political representation and the representation of reality has acquired a particular significance in the context of the forms of activism that grew up from the 1960s onwards. It is possible to classify the thinking on political representation that came out of these new forms of activism into two categories: first, those who felt that political representation as provided by liberal democracy is not working properly but representation is still important and so new mechanisms must be found, and second, those who have sought to find ways to think of a politics without representation.

In the first category we can think of the Maoists and new social movements – to return to Wallerstein's classifications – as attempting to find new ways to articulate the 'voice of the voiceless', often by seeking to make the state recognise some new category within its official discourse (Gellner 2010b: 8) or revise the boundaries of a particular category. For example, some activists have credited Mehda Patkar and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Hindi: Save the Narmada Movement) with bringing the concept of 'displacement' into state discourse on development, and one of the objectives of the health activists with whom this thesis is concerned is to expand the narrow, biomedical focus of 'health' and 'medicine' as categories in order to bring politics in (c.f. Adams 1998).

In the second category we can think in terms of Michel Feher's formulation of 'nongovernmental politics' (2007) as a category of political involvement whose practitioners are not "endowed with the legal or institutional authority" to which governmental agencies "lay claim" (2007: 13) – in particular, they do not have "a mandate conferred by a constituency" and are therefore "deprived of the authority bestowed on elected officials", which means that "they do not represent anyone but themselves and also that governmental representatives are no more accountable to them than to their other constituents" (2007: 15). Feher argues that for this reason "the most coherent exponents of nongovernmental politics are those who simply renounce any claim to [political] representation and turn instead to 2 other sources of legitimacy" – either the legitimacy of monitors of governmental practices, keeping watch on whether governing agencies honour the commitments they make to respect *universal* principles such as the protection of human rights and the environment, or the legitimacy that comes from acting in cases of "*particular* experiences that are judged intolerable by the people who are subjected to them and for which the actions of governing agencies can be held responsible" (2007: 15-16, my emphasis).[14] Feher's formulation corresponds fairly closely with the human rights organisations that Wallerstein took as his third category.

Some theorists inspired by the anti-globalisation movements have sought new approaches to the question of representation, one notable example being Hardt and Negri's work (refs). In a discussion of the World Social Forum (WSF) at Porto Alegre, Hardt suggests that it is highly significant that at the WSF there was not very much "old-style

[14] A point Feher seems to neglect is that although those who renounce any claim to representation may be the most coherent, they may not necessarily be the most successful in achieving their objectives, a point we will return to later in this chapter and in the thesis.

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ideological confrontation" (2004: 235), in particular between different political positions on the role of national sovereignty in the context of globalisation. He argues that the primary reason for this may have been that although some of the participants in the WSF were from "traditional parties and centralised organisations" equipped with spokespeople to "represent them and conduct their battles" (2004: 235), most were not; Hardt characterises the other participants as network movements and argues that "no one speaks for a network" (2004: 235). Rather, the movements "function rather like a public sphere, in the sense that they can allow full expression of differences within the common context of open exchange" so that they "displace contradictions", "the flow of the movements transforming the traditional fixed positions [of ideological conflict]...into so many more nodes in its indefinitely expansive network" (2004: 236). Forget conflict, contradiction and confrontation, Hardt says; "[p]olitical struggle in the age of network movements no longer works that way" (2004: 236). While Hardt's approach may offer something to the analysis of the political field, I would argue that its contribution is limited. As Mertes (2004) puts it in a response to Hardt's paper, "telecommunications metaphors" (Mertes 2004: 247) are of little use if we are trying to understand mass organisations such as the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) (Portugese: Landless Workers' Movement) of Brazil, whose membership includes a third of a million landless families and 20 000 activists; an organisation of that size *needs* a structure of representatives accountable to the members in order to debate and decide its strategies (Mertes 2004: 242-3).

Feher's formulation of nongovernmental politics and the exchange between Hardt and Mertes draw attention to the way in which radically different sets of ideas on political representation and its relation to the representation of reality have become prominent in activist discourse since the 1960s, and the way in which – contra Hardt – these sets of ideas have been put into conflict with each other in the course of activist groups attempting to work together. Here the JSA is a case in point. It includes some members who emphasise their status as mass organisations, others that emphasise their status as membership organisations, and others still who fit into Wallerstein's category of human rights organisations. What is more it is linked to an international network, PHM, which claims to be part of the global justice movement. Both JSA and PHM have hierarchical structures developed as a basis for democratic decision-making and used by their spokespeople to claim a mandate conferred by a constituency. There is a need for analysis of the moments when such claims go too far; when, for example, the nodal points in the sub-networks of the network are not representatives of anything or anyone else, *but speak as if they are* (Riles 2001).

However, the theoretical approach I adopt does not remain fixated with the truth of such claims; to continue with the Parulekar example, it *is* useful to explore the extent to which Parulekar succeeded in giving a voice to the *adivasis* of Thane district, but it is *also* useful to analyse what was achieved and how it was achieved through her activism with the *adivasis*. While Bourdieu provides a useful way of thinking through the relation between political representation and the representation of reality, Latour provides tools to analyse the processes by which collectives come together and make things happen through this politics of classification. Latour is associated with Actor-Network Theory (ANT), but ANT does not constitute a unified school of thought and my work draws mainly on a number of writings by Latour (1983, 1988, 1993, 1996, 2003, 2005) and a group of scholars who have operationalised his ideas in a particular way in the anthropology of development (Mosse 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Mosse and Lewis 2006). Latour understands the social as something that needs to be constantly made and

maintained, and understands this as taking place through processes of assembly whereby diverse actors are enrolled into larger collectives, particular ways of being, and projects. Recent anthropology of development, in particular David Mosse's book *Cultivating Development* (2005a), has drawn on Actor-Network Theory to emphasise that the policies that see the light of day – those that make it out of planning offices and into the field, those that are translated from a "world of signs into a world of objects" (Mosse 2005a: 35) – are those that succeed in 'enrolling' a wide range of actors with different agendas. Successful 'enrolment' relies upon 'brokers and translators' (Mosse and Lewis 2006) able to translate different agendas into terms that make them appear compatible with each other. This does not imply that once these mediators have done their translation, all actors are reading from the same script (i.e. a common, hegemonic interpretation). Rather, "subordinate actors" can and frequently do "create everyday spheres of action autonomous from the organising policy models", while at the same time working actively "to sustain those same models – the dominant interpretations – because it is in their interest to do so" (Mosse 2005a: 10; see also Scott 1990: xii). For Mosse, "the operational control which bureaucracies or NGOs have over events and practices in development is always constrained and often quite limited," and for this reason, "[w]hat is usually more urgent and more practical is control over the *interpretation* of events" (Mosse 2005a: 8, emphasis in original). Control over interpretation is never complete, and for this reason hegemony is never completely stable and the task of generating interest in a project is never over – hegemony and interest must be maintained (Latour 1996: 86) and, concomitantly, are always vulnerable. There are always actors attempting to build alternative constellations of interests – differently-assembled collectives – from the same sets of actors by doing a better job of enrolment.

Latour's framework encourages us to think of activists as brokers playing a key role in bringing together disparate interests, but more than that he insists that in identifying the interests brought together we do not stop at the point where we have listed all the actors identified by the activists themselves. Instead, he prompts us to examine the actors that are invisible in the activists' account, those to whom the activists do not attribute agency. Related to this point is his demand that we do not assume the relative size of actors at the start of the analysis, but examine the way actors construct scale (Latour 2005: 184-6, 1996). It is only by doing these things, he argues, that we will get a sense of the way things work, and of the way actors make things work for themselves. A pertinent example here comes from the way activists in international networks such as the People's Health Movement use their links to activists in other countries. Keck and Sikkink (1998) have described these relationships in terms of a "boomerang pattern" (1998: 13) whereby "international contacts amplify voices to which domestic governments are deaf, while the local work of target country activists legitimises efforts of activists abroad" (1998: 200) – a relationship that would not be as productive if the construction of a global/local dichotomy were not such a central element of contemporary 'common sense' (Riles 2001; Kamat 2002; Ghosh 2006; Mosse and Lewis 2006). This being said, the construction of scale also takes place within national borders, with Keck and Sikkink's boomerang pattern also contributing to a way of reading the relation between different activists within the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan*, especially when these are presented in terms of a dichotomy between 'national organisers' and 'grassroots' (see the first section of this Introduction). At the end of this section I examine the implications of Latour's approach for politics, i.e. what it can contribute to our understanding of how things work and therefore our understanding of what possible courses of action might be.

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While Latour is useful for thinking about the processes by which collectives actually come together, we need to return to Bourdieu in order to think about what activists do it for – what is at stake for them. By taking an interest in this I do not aim to take a cynical view of activists as charlatans and liars, but to understand the specific role that activists play and to follow both Bourdieu (1991) and Bailey (1970) in speaking of the rules of the game which they must follow if they are to succeed in playing that role. What Bourdieu's analysis shows us is that the political field is so structured that it requires political professionals to take this role, because it is the only way voices are represented in the political field in its current form. Here it is Bourdieu's analysis which allows us to see that what political professionals are actually doing, attempting to set up certain categories so that they become effective, is a form of power – it is Lukes' 'second face' of power, the ability to decide what is under discussion, which is the exercise of power in a way that actually does matter (ref). When social movements have successfully tied in the right supporters, they have sometimes been successful in promoting "new ways of thinking about development which might then go on to influence both public debate and specific programme and policy design" (Mitlin and Bebbington 2006: 10). Where this has been the case, it has been useful for social movement scholars "to explore the effects of discourse on society and to show how sets of ideas, bodies of knowledge, and ways of framing relationships and 'problems' in society have material effects on how social processes subsequently unfold, on how policies are defined, and on what is included and excluded in discussions of policy possibilities" (2006: 11). This is a focus in chapter 6 of this thesis.

Bourdieu does not raise the possibility of the political field being structured differently; Latour does. Bourdieu's tendency is to posit the role of the social scientist as the one who can view things from outside and see things as they are, which the actors cannot do. Latour is highly critical of Bourdieu's position here. Latour does not set up a division between actors and analysts in the way that Bourdieu does, and he thinks his own approach leads us to thinking of politics differently and so to doing politics differently, because it encourages us to recognise that there are far more possibilities of how and where to do politics than the old politics of representation imagines. Latour's position here is a valuable antidote to feelings of powerlessness in the face of neoliberalism, corporate globalisation, US imperialism or however we might want to identify 'the enemy', because it reminds us that the relative size of actors can change very quickly (2005: 184-5). At the same time, his approach is somehow not quite adequate for the analysis of power relations, as noted above, and this is where Bourdieu's analysis can be a useful supplement.

I anticipate that some readers – in particular those who are also my informants – will question my right to represent my informants in the way I do, and this question provides a suitable way to end this section and link it to the next. There is a sense in which my approach to the analysis of activism may be judged unethical because it disrupts the way activists represent themselves. If I write about their activism in the way that I do, many within that world will perceive my writing as 'anti-social' (Mosse 2006) – because I am writing 'against the grain' of the regime of enunciation, the 'talk', on which that world relies (Latour 2003). I would argue that it is important that outsiders write about communities of activists precisely because of the centrality of representation to what these communities do and claim to do, and precisely because those represented by these activists – such as the *adivasis* of Thane district – often do not have the opportunity to do so. This is not to suggest that I have the right to represent the activists because those they represent are denied that right, but to contextualise my writing within a broader set of

social relations and thus to put the ethical claims involved in context. I would also argue, following Nader (1972) that "[w]e should not necessarily apply the same ethics developed for studying the private [sphere]…to the study of institutions, organisations, bureaucracies that have a broad public impact" (1972: 304-5), the latter being a category into which my informants fall.

3. Methodology

This section offers not a dry summary of how I conducted this research project, but an account that starts to examine some of the conditions that enabled me to proceed in this way. The argument developed in the previous sections of the introduction is added to and expanded in this section – necessarily so, because, as intimated at the start of the previous section, my fieldwork experiences were decisive in determining the shape of the analysis I have constructed in this thesis.

John Harriss (2005a) notes that "[t]he great difficulty in the study of civil and social associations in Indian cities is that there is no means of defining the universe from which to sample" (2005a: 10). He argues that this problem is exacerbated by the fact that local politicians might not know about the associations operating in their constituencies and even if they do may not wish to acknowledge them "because they want to maintain that they themselves are the avenue whereby people can expect to find a means of tackling their problems" (2005a: 11), and NGOs are "often reluctant to acknowledge the existence of others" (2005a: 11). One of my informants told me that she wasn't sure whether she should speak to me because of a previous experience with a foreign ethnographer researching social movements. She explained that this ethnographer "met me last and I told her about a lot of groups she wasn't aware of; I knew the people she had talked to and I saw she had [only] been with one faction, and ethnographers are supposed to get the context, which in this case is the shape of Indian civil society" (Fieldnotes).

Without realising it at the time, my decision to focus on JSA both sidestepped and exacerbated this problem. On the one hand I believe – and will argue in this thesis – that JSA has brought together at least two significant factions in the space of Indian civil society, and as such provides case study material that captures at least some of the range of positions (the economy of stances) in that space. On the other hand, by defining the limits of my study as the limits of JSA, there was a risk I would assume the space of JSA was a sufficient basis on which to make generalisations about the space of Indian civil society. With this risk in mind I have tried to be very careful and cautious about the claims I make for my study and the language in which I couch my claims.

However, my focus on JSA as a national 'network of networks' posed another problem for me as an anthropologist: where was the village that I would study? The recent trend in anthropology toward the study of communities that extend beyond a small, clearly demarcated geographical space has seen the adoption of a range of strategies for dealing with this in the context of fieldwork (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; other refs). My own approach was to study JSA 'through' three organisations with whom I spent the majority of my time: SATHI (Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives), Kashtakari Sanghatna (Marathi: Toiler's Union), and CHC (Community Health Cell). I focused on SATHI, a rights-based health NGO based in Pune, as the national secretariat of JSA from 2003-2007 [check] and as a crucial driving force behind many of JSA's campaign activities up to the present. My interest in how rights-based NGO professionals manage the relationships between their paid work and voluntary social action on the one

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hand, and between their own organisations and people's organisations on the other (see chapter 4), led me to spend time with Kashtakari Sanghatna, a militant people's organisation operating in *adivasi* areas of Thane district, as SATHI's earliest project partner (see chapter 6) and a partner in the Community-based Monitoring of Health Services programme in which many JSA member organisations participated. I also spent time in Bangalore with CHC, an organisation that has played a crucial role in the relationship between JSA as the Indian People's Health Movement, and the international People's Health Movement (see chapter 3). My focus on these organisations meant that I spent most of my time in Pune, *adivasi* areas of Thane district and Bangalore, but I also conducted interviews in a much wider range of locations across India and also in Bangladesh and London, and my analysis traces connections between the sites I visited and others across the world. Thus although I spent much of my time in Western India, I would describe my study primarily as an ethnography *in* rather than *of* Western India.

Like Annelise Riles' study of a global civil society network (2001), the focus of my research "cannot be defined satisfactorily by a sense of geographic place", as many of the practices associated with JSA take place in locations spread across the world or through email networks, telephone conversations and the circulation of newspapers and radio and television news programmes so that more than "a place or society", what the persons and institutions described in my thesis share is "a set of informational practices" (Riles 2001: xiv). In such circumstances the researcher must find ways of studying what the members of the community *do* share. As intimated in the previous section, my analysis suggests that the kind of social action to which the JSA aspires relies upon a set of practices which aim to produce a representation of reality in which JSA appears as an actor with a mandate conferred by a constituency – that constituency being, ultimately, 'the people' – insofar as the acceptance of such a representation of reality by the actors JSA engages with can lend authority to JSA's interventions in the politics of health. In seeking to study this set of practices and their effects it would have been inadequate for me to limit my fieldwork to 'a village in the city' (Passaro 1997), an 'epistemologically controlled unit' (1997: 151) like a particular NGO's office, because this would have limited my focus to a particular site of production of this representation of reality without seeing how this representation is performed and received in other environments; it was also necessary for me to draw on a wide repertoire of data collection techniques and to place more emphasis on research methods other than the participant observation that remains the anthropologist's staple (see Gupta 1995: 377).

My fieldwork involved participant observation, unstructured interviews, a survey, and gathering documents (some aspects of my entry into the field were dealt with in the first section of this chapter; aspects of my dwelling are dealt with at the end of this section). I recorded over 100 interviews, totalling nearly 200 hours of recording. In addition I took extensive notes on interviews, conversations and observations. I carried out a survey; here I note that while it was circulated to a large number of people associated with JSA it got very few responses, but having said that the responses I did get were useful, throwing new light on my other data. I took notes and photocopies from documents made available to me by SATHI in Pune, the Centre for Public Health and Equity (CPHE) at CHC in Bangalore, Denzil Saldanha at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, and the Centre for Education and Documentation (CED) in Mumbai.[15] The first of these had many documents relating to JSA and the Maharashtra state chapter of JSA, *Jan Arogya*

[15] At 3 Suleman Chambers, 4 Battery Street, Mumbai 400 001. See www.doccentre.net for details, and http://base.d-p-h.info/en/fiches/dph/fiche-dph-7448.html for a history of CED. I am grateful to John D'Souza for assisting my enquiries at CED.

Abhiyan (JAA) (Marathi: People's Health Movement), the second relating to international PHM, and the third and fourth relating to Kashtakari Sanghatna and *adivasi* areas of Thane.

However, it is important not to get too wrapped up in what anthropologists such as Riles (2001), Gupta (1995) or Passaro (1997) see as the 'difference' between the study of communities that extend beyond a small, clearly demarcated geographical space and the traditional anthropological study of 'village societies'. Once it is understood that an important (if not the major or indeed only) way in which a research subject is 'global', 'transnational' or a 'network' is that it successfully *represents* itself as such, it becomes possible to see the subject as less dissimilar to traditional anthropological subjects than it first appeared. Mosse (2005b) has suggested that because the international development industry is 'inordinately influenced' by "a relatively small border- and agency-crossing class of like-minded individuals with shared ideas and values, childhoods, education, lifestyle, social and professional circuits", it is particularly easy to subject this industry to "detailed ethnographic study" (Mosse 2005b: 17). I would argue that the same can be said of JSA. The relations between members of JSA are multiple: professional, political, intellectual, moral, and broadly personal, so that, as one informant put it, "in the history of how things happen it's very much to do with individuals getting along or not getting along, with personal relationships, friendships, and the ups-and-downs with that, whose ego got hurt in what exercise and therefore groups dispersed" (Interview transcript; see also Geertz 1983: 157). It is in this sense Mosse's appropriation of Latour's catchphrase – "we have never been global" (Mosse 2005b: 24; Latour 1993) – rings true of this network as much as of the international development 'class' Mosse has described (Mosse 2005a, 2005b; Mosse and Lewis 2006).

At this point I want to comment on the types of data I got from different types of informants. James C. Scott opens his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) by describing how during his attempts to make sense of class relations in a Malay village, he found that many of the poorer and more economically dependent villagers "sang one tune when they were in the presence of the rich and another tune when they were among the poor", and likewise "[t]he rich too spoke in one way to the poor and another among themselves" (1990: ix). Scott asks: "How do we study power relations when the powerless are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful and when the powerful may have an interest in overdramatising their reputation and mastery?" (1990: xii). In his study he describes the strategic poses adopted by both the powerless and powerful as 'public transcripts', and contrasts them with 'hidden transcripts' – the narratives the former offer when they are not in the presence of the latter, and *vice versa*.[16] Scott's public and hidden transcripts provide a useful explanatory tool for understanding why, in my fieldwork, my encounters with 'rank-and-file' workers of civil society organisations, senior staff of the same organisations and government officials often took very different forms. The rank-and-file workers of civil society organisations, as well as their ex-workers, were often the most willing to offer me hidden transcripts – critiques of their organisation and its leaders, as well as critiques of civil society more broadly, but also the 'nuts-and-bolts' of ethnography, the stories of 'how it really happened'. Senior staff of the same organisations were often willing to critique

[16] Scott writes that "I shall use the term *public transcript* as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (1990: 2, emphasis in original), "*transcript* is used almost in its juridical sense…of a complete record of what was said [including] nonspeech acts such as gestures and expressions" (1990: 2n1), and "I shall use the term *hidden transcript* to characterise discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders" (1990: 4).

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government, but tended to offer me public transcripts when discussing themselves or their organisation – the kind of account they might offer a funding agency or write in a public report, narratives of models (with inputs and outputs) working as planned or 'failing' (Mosse 2005a). Government officials – and here I have in mind those working in the administration at central, state, district or block (sub-district) levels, but also public sector doctors working in Primary Health Centres – frequently sought to avoid talking to me at all, whether by asking me to meet them on a later date, offering me official documents or, in one case, stating that "all the information you need can be found on our website".

Lest my point is unclear here, let me clarify that I am not claiming that any of my informants sought to mislead me or obstruct my research, because I do not think this is the case. What I want to suggest is something that is implied by the argument I developed in the previous section of this introduction: that power relations affect discourse, the ways in which people represent things, and that this is no less true of the relations between researcher and researched than in other relations between actors. Although I take it as given that there are power relations between researcher and researched, I agree with Mosse's (2006) argument that there is no "stable constellation of power in social research. Anthropologists have the power to represent; and their informants have different capacities to object" (2006: 951) – capacities which are often closely correlated with the need the informant feels to control how they are represented by an anthropologist and their sense of the possible effects of what the anthropologist publishes.

In a recent reflection on his own experiences, Mosse asks "Does the ethnographic account have to be in the nature of an 'ambush' on social life?" (2006: 952). Although I believe that some of my informants have and will continue to experience my writing about them in this way, I have taken measures to limit the extent to which my research is experienced as such. My awareness that many of my informants would not have reflected on the potential ethical implications of my research at the time I entered their community led me to launch a discussion with my informants about how to manage these implications, to see if a consensus could be reached. Hardly anyone responded to the email I sent to a large number of informants, probably partly because email was not the right way to try to broach the issue, and partly because many thought there was no point in having a conversation about 'ethics in the abstract' until I had produced something written.

Taking this into account I settled on a course of action: where possible I would hide the identity of my informants in my writings about them if this is what they wanted,[17] and when I had written something I would circulate it to as many of them as possible and give them time to comment, with the intention of reviewing my text in light of their comments and, like Mosse, making changes where *I* judge this appropriate (2006: 948) and offering to record alternative points of view in a post-script (2005a: ix).[18] I do not

[17] The nature of my research means that even where I have attempted to anonymise my informants it will not be difficult for someone from the community to make an educated guess about who is who, and this is the basis of my contestation of the manner in which SOAS has attempted to change its policy on doctoral theses to make them "freely available on the web" (email from Beth Clark, Head of Electronic Services in SOAS Library, July 2010) during the summer of 2010, apparently without following correct procedures of consulting academics in the various committees set up to manage the School's policies with regard to research. For more details see http://petitiononline.com/ethesis2.

[18] I gather that some individuals based at the Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health at JNU, who are associated with JSA and received the emails I sent announcing this 'solution' to my ethics issue,

consider this course of action a 'solution' to the ethical dilemmas posed by anthropological research, even though I do think of it as a step in the right direction; I do not think it is sufficient because the texts I produce can have real effects as "active agents in the worlds they describe" (Mosse 2006: 951, see also 2005a: xii),[19] in particular because, as one of my informants pointed out to me, the anthropologist's "assessment" would be seen as "objective" (Email correspondence).

It is with this in mind that I want to emphasise here that I consider my analysis a partial interpretation not an objective assessment of JSA, and explain some of the elements which define how I am positioned and influence what I write. One innovation introduced by the large number of feminist social researchers who entered academia in the West from the 1970s onwards was the idea that social researchers should make an effort to position themselves in their texts by locating themselves socially (Wolf 1996: 13-19, 32-35), and although there have been a number of valid criticisms of this approach (Patai 1991, 1994), I still think there is some value in doing so. I would identify myself as a white, British, middle-class, heterosexual male. I went from school to undergraduate studies to a Masters and then to a PhD without a break, without ever having – as my father might put it – a "real job". My long-term relationship with an Indian from a progressive and politically-active family has had a major impact on how I view social relations and how I try to live my life.

Beyond this attempt to locate myself socially, I think it is important to also locate how I was positioned during fieldwork, because "[a]s an anthropologist I do not have knowledge or experience of 'culture,' but experience contingent events like everyone else and make sense of them" (Mosse 2006: 949-950). Earlier in this section I contrasted my encounters with 'rank-and-file' workers of civil society organisations, senior staff of the same organisations and government officials; what I did not mention at that point was that the contrast was closely related to the friendships I made with certain individuals and groups in the field, as many of the close friendships I made were with people working for civil society organisations. It was primarily through these friendships that I felt I approximated the semi-mythical Malinowskian achievement of immersion in the field (Stocking 1992: 51-3). As I put it in my notebook at the time, "You come to embody rather than merely enact the methodology of anthropology when your every moment is bound up in the field, when you spend every moment immersed, when there is no private flat you return to in the evening but rather the house of someone who is intimately part of the culture and community you are studying, which is what my group of friends were" (Fieldnotes). It goes without saying that not only did these friendships enable cultural immersion as an anthropologist-in-training, but also a support network and a means for surviving the loneliness and angst of fieldwork as a person.

The data I collected was also influenced by my failure to achieve fluency in any of the local languages, something that most anthropologists would perhaps be loathe to admit (Borchgrevink 2003). Although I had gained a basic grasp of Hindi (the dominant language in North India) and Marathi (the dominant language in Maharashtra state) by

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found this solution quite amusing and refer to it when discussing research ethics with their own research students. I assume their amusement derives from the fact that my solution is in fact no solution at all, because there is no solution to issues to do with ethics, only techniques for making yourself feel more or less better about what you have decided to do anyway.

[19] I am reminded here of a comment made by one of my informants in relation to a conference paper I wrote after six months of fieldwork and circulated to a small number of informants for comments; he said that the paper had sparked vigorous debate within his organisation, and that this was a good thing.

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the time I came to do my fieldwork, and although my competency in these languages improved as a result of continued language training and practice, it was still inadequate and I employed an interpreter for some periods when I was collecting data outside the big cities. The majority of my interactions with 'rank-and-file' workers of civil society organisations, senior staff of the same organisations and government officials took place in English.

Finally, I wish to quote Mona Mehta on some of the limitations of the methodology I have adopted:

> ...the use of oral and life history methods meant revisions and shift in focus as the subjects of research played an active role in determining priorities. This created some problems; data obtained through these methods was often fragmented and did not enable easy analysis. Often links between individual experiences and historical events were not always evident and much of the data made sense only at a later stage in the writing. As a result, some parts of the discussion lack depth of information making it difficult to define wider implications and longer-term trends. Further, qualitative methods are also difficult to revisit as it is not easy to recapture moments from informal interviews or narration's [sic] of life histories. It was, therefore, not always possible to fill in specific gaps in the database during [later fieldwork]... (Mehta 1999: 15)

Readers should take these elements into consideration. The anthropologist does not write with a detached, omniscient "God's-eye-view"; s/he is an actor, producing interpretations that are no more valid than those of other actors because they are based on data that is no different to the data on which other actors build their interpretations: incomplete, fragmented, and partial. Thus rather than taking my thesis as a researcher's objective assessment of JSA, I invite readers to view it as a partial interpretation shaped by the exigencies of the fieldwork encounter and by my sense of what it was appropriate for me to write.

I have tried to make this thesis relevant to a range of actors. As someone sympathetic to the intentions of the activists of JSA and PHM, I have sought to navigate a path between making my research appropriate and relevant to my informants and ensuring that it is appropriate and relevant for a doctoral thesis in social anthropology. In a conversation during the PHM's International People's Health University (IPHU) course in Bangladesh in 2007, which I attended as a participant, David Legge – an Associate Professor at La Trobe University in Australia and coordinator of the IPHU – told me "you need to decide if you'll write your thesis and a separate analysis for internal circulation in the JSA, or choose to write a formative rather than descriptive-analytical thesis that can be used by JSA/PHM" (Fieldnotes). I hope I have written a formative thesis that will be of interest and of practical use to JSA, PHM, and activists more broadly, as food for thought as to where to go next, in large part because the theoretical approach I have adopted lends itself to analysis that takes the form of a response rather than "merely a critique" of the actors' practices (Riles 2006: 22).

In addition I have certain obligations to my funders (the Economic and Social Research Council), and to the community of social researchers more broadly. My obligations to both groups are not particularly constraining and mainly relate to the dissemination of my work. In the latter, I will strive to ensure the findings of my research are made available to other social researchers working within India and/or on similar issues to those I have taken up. Having said this, in the course of my research I have come to believe that it is not in fact the researcher's primary duty to disseminate his/her research to other social researchers; rather, the researcher's primary duty is to disseminate it where it might be relevant and might make a difference (Skeggs 2002: 365). As such, dissemination does

not have to be limited to publication, presentations at academic conferences, or academic teaching. Dissemination can also be through my activism.[20]

Throughout the thesis I have anonymised the names of my informants. I follow my informants' name usage conventions, which means that I refer to some individuals by their first name alone and others by their given name plus a term like "bhai/bhau" (Hindi/Marathi: brother) that is considered an extension of that individual's given name that indicates his/her gender and status as a *karyakarta* (Hindi/Marathi: activist).

4. Structure of the thesis

The chapters that follow find different ways to approach the core problematic of the relationship between reality and representation in the field of activism. Chapter 2 presents a history of the political field in modern India, focusing on the field of social action as a sub-section of that and emphasising things I take to be significant for the development of the health activist community my thesis examines. I provide an account of the way categories, concepts and narratives emerge and evolve during the colonial period and after Independence, concentrating on changes in the 1970s and 1980s. The final section of the chapter describes the emergence of the health activist community from the 1970s to the 1990s, arguing that its development can only be understood with reference to the account of the political field and field of social action earlier in the chapter.

Chapter 3 offers a fractured account of the foundational myth of the JSA – the mobilisation around the Jan Swasthya Sabha (People's Health Assembly) in the year 2000. By playing-off differing narratives against each other in a manner influenced by but not identical to the approach taken in the film *Rashomon* discussed earlier in this Introduction, I begin to introduce what I consider to be the significant divisions within JSA. I argue that we learn a lot about the particular 'crowd' to which an informant belongs from what they mention and what they choose to exclude from their narrative. I also argue that in their narratives many of my informants exaggerate their own agency (the extent to which they have influenced events) and the agency of their faction within JSA, and argue that this is because these narratives are a tool for enrolling support.

Chapter 4 examines the everyday world of rights-based NGOs, discussing the opposition that NGO professionals articulate between voluntary social action and paid NGO work, and describing their practices of what I term 'parasitic voluntarism'. As discussed in the first section of this Introduction, categories of activism are often constructed in a way that positions some types of action and actor as morally superior to others. This chapter develops this idea by setting out a hierarchy of virtue articulated by some of my informants and exploring how this framework relates to their practices. Although the chapter draws on a range of empirical material there is a focus on the practices of SATHI, a key protagonist in the chapters that follow (see Methodology section above).

Taking the JSA experience in Maharashtra state as a case study from which to draw certain lessons about how JSA works as a coalition of actors, chapter 5 offers an answer to two questions: "What is JSA?" and "Why is it so hard to specify exactly what JSA is?" The chapter approaches these questions 'sideways', offering an analysis that refuses to 'pin down' the essence of JSA on the basis that doing so would prevent us from seeing

[20] I am grateful to a conversation with Paul Rollier in which this point emerged.

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the politics of classification that simultaneously holds the JSA together and threatens to tear it apart. The chapter argues that the existence of JSA is conditional on the possibility of conflicting narratives and the vagueness and multiplicity of JSA's identities, precisely because of the diversity of the actors and agendas which JSA brings together.

Chapter 6 provides an account of the JSA community's engagements with the government and the people. This account ties together the elements presented in the previous chapters, making clear some of the things at stake in the competition between factions within JSA. Different actors within JSA stand to gain or lose a lot if JSA does or does not pursue an agenda compatible with their own in its engagements with the government, and I argue that this is why so much energy is devoted to the task of 'generating interest', attempting to enrol supporters to their own interpretation of (1) the moral hierarchy of social action and (2) what JSA is and (3) what JSA should be.

Chapter 7 summarises the findings of the research and the conclusions of the thesis.

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2. History: The field of social action in colonial and postcolonial India

Introduction

> An individual might think that was the meeting where it happened. Someone else may think [it was a different meeting, but] these are just sort of best left to [them] because beyond in a restricted way, I don't think specific meetings can lead to movements of this kind so I would in fact trade the processes for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the barefoot doctors in China in the 60s, China in fact abandoned it but that was something that got so many people interested in community health in the first place. So all those things are really the heritage that combined to form the PHM [People's Health Movement], I would say. (Dr Suresh, Delhi Science Forum, interview transcript)

My PhD is a study of *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (JSA, the People's Health Movement). How should we contextualise or historicise the JSA? There are several ways of doing this, and a number of tensions between these ways can be seen in the quote above. This chapter does not seek to resolve these tensions but holds these different positions in dialogue with each other. As such it tells many stories at the same time. It tells the story of a specific group of individuals who worked with and alongside each other from the 1970s onwards, and who decided to form the JSA after the health for all campaign in 2000 (see chapter 3) but first it locates these individuals within the conditions that shaped the emergence of the community health movement in India. I argue that while there were events and processes taking place elsewhere in the world that influenced the emergence of community health movements in several countries during the same time period, the influence they had on what was taking place in India differed from the influence they had elsewhere because of conditions specific to the Indian sub-continent's history. This argument can be read as a warning to health activists who might hope that the Indian experience can be replicated in their country. I argue that while the Indian experience can be learned from, its particular contours cannot be replicated.

To make my analysis and argument in this chapter easier to follow and more structurally similar to the later chapters of my thesis, I have structured it as a conversation between different narratives. What I refer to in this chapter as 'the Lokayan narrative' is a history of Indian civil society viewed from a particular class and caste perspective and a particular moment in time, which has, since the 1980s, been articulated by a number of scholars and activists (Kothari 1984; CSDS 1, 2; Sheth 1984; Sethi 1984, 1998). It is a narrative which can perhaps be associated with one institution more than any other: Lokayan (Hindi?: dialogue of the people), which D.L. Sheth (1984) describes as "a macro-level forum for grass-roots activists and academics in India" (1984: 259), created in 1980 to "link up with the grass-roots movements and organisations" and "serve them in response to their felt needs" (1984: 262).[21] It is also associated with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, founded by Rajni Kothari in 1963. My aim in the first four sections of this chapter is to outline the Lokayan narrative in its entirety, and to bring in other narratives at various points to problematise, critique and highlight the

[21] Lokayan, meaning 'dialogue of the people', started in 1980 as a forum for interaction between activists and concerned intellectuals through meetings, workshops, working groups and lectures. Professors Rajni Kothari and D.L. Sheth provided the organisation's overall leadership during the initial phase. Later, Shiv Visvanathan and Vijay Pratap acted as chairpersons, and Harsh Sethi acted as a convenor. (http://www.rightlivelihood.org/lokayan.html accessed 16/8/10) Sheth (1984) describes Lokayan as "a macro-level forum for grass-roots activists and academics in India" (1984: 259), created to "link up with the grass-roots movements and organisations" and "serve them in response to their felt needs" (1984: 262).

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limits of the Lokayan narrative. The narratives I put into tension with the Lokayan narrative include the histories of the Subaltern Studies Collective (refs), activist histories such as those of Gail Omvedt (1976, 1993, 2006), and works of historical anthropology such as Hansen (1999) and Anupama Rao (2009). I argue that the Lokayan narrative and the other narratives with which it is in conversation have shaped the economy of stances and the political field of the period in which my informants have acted, and that many of my informants would subscribe to part or all of the Lokayan narrative.

The first four sections of the chapter present a history of the political field in modern India, focusing on developments of particular significance for the JSA community on the basis that these can be built upon later in the chapter or elsewhere in the thesis. As such, particular emphasis is placed on the production of what is today referred to by a range of terms including the third sector, civil society, the field of voluntary action, the field of social action, and the NGO (non-governmental organisation) sector. Following the work of Latour and Bourdieu (see chapter 1), I start from the perspective that such categories do not exist in and of themselves but are made to exist through the practices of actors. From this perspective, the political field itself is "an historically produced realm of institutions and hegemonic discourses, where societal conflicts and dislocations are selected, translated, and tamed into ritualised procedures and practices of politics" (Hansen 1999: 24), and the field of social action is an historically produced sub-section of the political field with its own peculiar rules and rituals, understood to be not quite part of the economy, not quite part of the State, and yet part of the political field nonetheless. Over time the practices of new sets of actors working in different conditions modify the form and content of these categories, and therefore the first four sections of the chapter analyse the formation and transformation of the political field and field of social action from the colonial period until the present. This analysis provides the context necessary for the history of the health movement contained in the fifth section of the chapter.

1. Mission and Social Reform

A wide variety of scholars have articulated a common narrative of how civil society first emerged in India (Jayal 2001: 128; refs). The common narrative goes like this. During the colonial period there were two distinct streams of non-governmental intervention in the social world of India. In the first stream were the para-state organisations, mainly church groups, with or without the patronage of the colonial state, that started intervening in the indigenous world through education, health, social welfare and reform (CSDS 2; chapter on religious movements in Rao 1978). Some of these formed networks that are part of JSA today. The Medical Missionary Association was formed in 1905 as a network of Protestant medical missionaries, and was renamed the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) in 1926. The Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) was formed in 1943. From the nineteenth century onwards indigenous groups – the second stream – began to emerge (CSDS 2). Many scholars have argued that the upper-class, upper-caste, western-educated Hindus who built social reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthna Samaj, and Arya Samaj did so because "they felt either threatened or shamed by the activities of Christian missionaries, who not only were succeeding in converting large numbers of Hindus, especially those of low caste, but who also actively engaged in social service" (Caplan 106; see also chapter on religious movements in Rao 1978). Others have pointed to the fact that it was a response to social changes inside India, in particular urbanisation and growth of employment of men in government service (Caplan 1985: 107, referencing Mazumdar 1976).

While the common narrative emphasises these two strands of activity in the colonial period, there were of course other forms of social action going on. The Subaltern Studies school of historians have emphasised the way in which different forms of protest were carried out by adivasi (tribal) and peasant communities against the colonial administration and exploitation by landlords in this period, and faced brutal suppression as a result (e.g. Hardiman 1987; Skaria 1999; Omvedt 1993: 7). [the Dravidian and anticaste movements were vehemently opposed to the Hindu reformists and were significant and, as Omvedt (1976) and Rao (2009) have argued, were able to craft "novel alliances between peasant protest and anticaste thought", particularly in western India through the Marathi-language public sphere that emerged with the rise of print capitalism (Rao 2009: 39).] This raises the question of why these are absent from the common narrative.[22] In this chapter I develop an argument which provides an answer to this question and an explanation for other absences and silences in the common narrative.

By the third quarter of the nineteenth-century, an urban middle class had emerged displaying certain characteristics of Habermas' notion of a bourgeois public sphere (1989) – circulation of English-language newspapers, liberal ideas and a demand for Western education (Jayal 2001: 129). In his study of the Hindu nationalist movement, Hansen argues that "[t]he sheer size and sophistication of the emerging educated middle classes, their preponderance in the governmental services, and the general emphasis on pragmatic incorporation of elite segments all over India into the structure of governance meant that colonial rule was organised around a crucial 'double discourse'" (1999: 32). On the one hand, the huge mass of ordinary people, peasants, artisans, and 'coolies' were regarded as irrational, passionate, and traditional and, therefore, in need of firm governance as subjects of the colonial state. On the other hand, the educated middle classes, landlords, the literate elites, and the 'natural' leaders of sects, castes, petty kingdoms, and religious communities, were considered to be amenable to reasoned persuasion and negotiation (1999: 32).[23] The colonial state relied upon the latter groups to rule the former, entrusting them with local administration below district level. Significantly for Hansen's argument and my own, they were principally expected to govern areas such as religion, community and family that the authorised colonial and orientalist knowledge of India considered to be "sensitive and at the heart of the Orient" (Hansen 1999: 33) and "impediments to the modern bureaucratic state" (Rao 2009: 4).

This was a "bifurcation between proper 'society' and the world of the 'masses'" (Hansen 1999: 33), but a bifurcation that was flexible and to some extent negotiable, "premised on social rank and on mastery of western conceptual languages rather than on space and 'tradition'" (1999: 33). Upper-caste Hindus came to dominate proper society and entry into it, partly because it was these groups who had made the most effective use of the new educational and commercial opportunities emerging within the colonial state, and partly because following the 1857 rebellion the political powers of Muslim rulers had been curbed, enabling the upper-caste Hindu communities to gain a new power and

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[22] Roy Burman (1978) says that in the colonial period tribal revolts "rarely attracted the attention of the nationalist leaders" (1978: 321).

[23] Against Hansen's focus on the emergence of the educated middle classes as a causal factor, Rao (2009) points to Dirks' (2001) argument that "an enhanced politicisation of civil society took shape after the Mutiny of 1857" in which "[s]ocial and ascriptive identities such as religion and caste became sites of political conflict and competition, leaving the colonial state to arbitrate between good and bad, deserving and undeserving forms of politics", and argues that it is this that we should look to when seeking to understand the development of "a hierarchy of colonial political forms, where native agency was stigmatised as requiring colonial correction" (Rao 2009: 5).

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public visibility as representatives and 'natural leaders' of the Hindu community that successive colonial legislation was bringing into existence as an object of governance (Hansen 1999: 36-7). In this context, we can see how the educated middle class social reformers, with their paternalist vision of social uplift of the masses, fitted into the double discourse of the colonial state. Their activities could be understood as seeking to organise, systematise and civilise the inner life of communities whose content and boundaries the colonial state was attempting to fix as governable objects. Their approach involved going to the lower-castes and attempting to inculcate upper-caste and 'modern' values on the one hand, and on the other hand making demands on the state to enact reformist legislation. This approach required management by the colonial state, which enacted the 1860 Registration of Societies Act to define their activities and legal identity. In contrast, protests by subaltern groups resisting their domination by indigenous elites and the colonial state were understood as the irrational actions of the ignorant masses, requiring suppression by the state.

2. Nationalist Movement

The Indian National Congress, formed in 1885 by a group of English-educated lawyers and professionals, did not become a mass movement capable of pressing the colonial authorities for greater self-rule until the 1920s under the leadership of Mohandas K. Gandhi. In the intervening period a variety of stances competed with each other. In Maharashtra, one notable voice of opposition to the paternalism of the social reformers was Jotiba[24] Phule, a man of *mali* (gardener) caste who published *Gulamgiri* (slavery) in 1885. *Gulamgiri* critiqued the presentation of caste relations as religious order, arguing that this was an upper caste ideology justifying the exploitation and inequality of lower castes (Rao 2009: 13). More than just an attack on the ideology of Brahminism, however, Phule and other anticaste activists understood that colonial policies had deepened caste distinctions, enhancing the position of the Brahmin minority through their overrepresentation in educational and bureaucratic contexts (Rao 2009: 13). Phule's ideas have seen something of a revival in recent times, and in Maharashtra he has been taken as a founding figure by the anticaste movement but also by farmers' movements, rural-based environmental movements and the women's movement (Omvedt 2006: 21), the latter due to the way he equated the plight of the lower castes with that of women on the basis that in Hindu scriptures both groups were defined as impure and polluting (Rao 2009: 50). In his own time, however, he was little known outside Maharashtra and his significance for the direction taken by the nationalist movement was limited,[25] partly because he wrote almost entirely in Marathi and lacked the all-India communication network the elites of his time had (Omvedt 1993: 14), but more importantly because his ideas were not compatible with either the paternalism towards the masses felt by the educated middle class or the spaces of mass mobilisation facilitated by the double discourse of the colonial state.

As the colonial state had structured the political field in terms of the representation of communities by indigenous elites, social struggles against indigenous elites had to be curbed and defused in order to make possible an anti-colonial coalition based on

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[24] Omvedt notes that "the apparently trivial but symbolically important mistakes of spelling Phule's name as 'Jyotiba' in the brahmanical fashion rather than 'Jotiba' after the village deity continued to be made again and again by upper-caste communists" (2006: 78).

[25] Phule did form a number of organisations, most notably the Satyashodhak Samaj (truth-seekers' society) (Omvedt 1993: 15). Ambedkar acknowledged him as one of his 'gurus', although "very little of Phule's influence is actually seen in Ambedkar's writings" (Omvedt 2006: 22-3).

horizontal alliances among the educated middle class and other indigenous elites, who then sought to control their community or locality through vertical ties of dependency (Hansen 1999: 40). The paternalism of the relationship between the middle-class leadership and the masses was reconciled with the demand for nationhood by imagining the masses as simultaneously ignorant and traditional, requiring elevation through development and nationhood, and innocent and pure, embodying the essential cultural spirit of the nation (Hansen 1999: 43). The colonial double discourse lived on in the nationalist movement's cultural romanticism, its discourse of the nation as existing in a sublime cultural realm separate and prior to the profane political realm, the cultural realm simultaneously latent in the masses and requiring the protection of the middle-classes (Hansen 1999: 40-2). As Chatterjee has argued, this cultural realm was feminised and posed as the pure 'Other' of the public sphere where the middle-class leadership of the movement engaged in the necessary but polluting and morally questionable political encounter with the colonial rulers (Chatterjee 1989), where the rationalities and naked imperatives of the political field compelled actors to speak and act in certain ways (Hansen 1999: 54). Gandhi's unique position in the nationalist movement derived from his ability to perform an understanding of the nation through his voluntary immersion in the world of the masses on the one hand, while on the other continuing to embody the cultural practices of the Hindu upper-castes and thereby signalling to the middle-classes his superiority to the masses (Hansen 1999: 43 and 40n20).

Of course, Gandhi's was not the only voice in the movement, and as the nationalist movement became a mass movement, other voices modified its course but ultimately did not disturb the paternalistic relation between middle class and masses.[26] A strong Tamil non-brahman movement probably contributed a lot to the growth of dalit movements in the 1920s and 1930s (Omvedt 2006: 34-5), as of course did Ambedkar (Omvedt 1993: 21; Rao 2009: 16-17); the 'non-Aryan' themes struck a deep mass resonance, particularly because of the use of 'Aryan' themes by the elite.[27] These movements prompted Hindu nationalist upper-castes to revise and reinterpret the racial aspect of their discourse to stress a Hindu unity that was more attractive to non-brahmans (Omvedt 1993: 18). "Untouchable reform became central to the identity of a confessional Hinduism and to the consolidation of Hindus as a majority political constituency representative of the nation as a whole. Equally, locating untouchability wholly within religion [to use Hansen's categories, the 'cultural' rather than 'political' realm] effectively limited the colonial state and legal status to little more than delegating to Hindus the problem of untouchability" (since the nationalists had adopted the colonial state's distinction between social – managed by indigenous middle classes – and political – managed by colonial state – "even as they asserted their right to define the *content* of those categories). "Thus if the religious solution of inverting negative stereotypes [here she is referring to Gandhi's renaming untouchables Harijans, or 'people of god', and his exhortations that upper-caste Hindus should perform stigmatised labour] affirmed the primacy of the 'social' for anticolonial mobilisations, it also reproduced upper castes' hegemony by deflecting attention away from victims of caste discrimination" and

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[26] Bardhan writes that "As the many examples cited in the recent writings on 'subaltern' Indian history suggest, the masses usually put their own interpretations on the aims of the movement and proceeded to act them out, often in complete contradiction with the stated goals and methods of the nationalist leadership" (Bardhan 1997: 188).

[27] Rao writes that Ambedkar's "genealogy of the Dalit rejected the biological/racial distinction between Aryan and Dravidian that distinguished Phule's vision of the non-Brahmin Dalit, though Ambedkar maintained [like Phule] that sociopolitical conflict between Dalit and Brahmin was the structuring antagonism of Indian history" (Rao 2009: 17, see also 39-40).

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politicising "untouchability as a problem for Hindus", effectively limiting participation in social reforms to upper castes" (Rao 2009: 6).

During the same period a new left intelligentsia was formulating a radical class ideology and leading "militant struggles that attracted large sections of the exploited and gave them a vision of an equalitarian society" (Omvedt 2006: 40), but ultimately avoided the recognition of caste, preferring a class framework that sought to override rather than reinterpret what were seen as irrational traditional identities, hoping to render them irrelevant. In the end the left, from the Communists at one extreme to Nehru at the other, placed itself at the service of the nationalist movement, seeing the nationalist movement "as basically the only valid non-class struggle of the period", and in doing so prevented the creation of a strong broad movement of the oppressed combining the left and dalit movements. This enabled the stigmatisation of the dalit and non-brahman movements as pro-British and the removal of their concerns from the nationalist agenda (Omvedt 2006: 42). "Partha Chatterjee, in his influential essay, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question,' argued that the issue of social reform came to an abrupt end in the early twentieth century precisely at the moment when Indian nationalism came to political maturity [...] In fact the precise period of social reform's disappearance from the upper-caste agenda is that of its appearance on other agendas – in the emerging political activism of women themselves [...] as well as the debates over the 'woman's question' in anti-caste movements" (Rao 2003: 20-21).

Most histories of social action in India focus on the nationalist movement, as if an entire country was gathering together as one. Niraja Jayal, for example, has written that the Indian National Congress "eventually came to occupy most of the space that could be described as civil society" as a "vast umbrella organisation that assimilated and accommodated diverse social groups and interests" (Jayal 2001: 129). While it is undoubtedly true that the Congress was successful in rendering diverse positions compatible with each other in order to overcome the colonial state, a particular vision of the movement came to dominate and, when independence was won, significantly shaped the development of the political field in India in the following decades.

3. The Nehruvian Golden Age

Far from being a clean slate, independence saw the Congress simply occupying the structures of the colonial state. Partition, internal disturbances and the difficulties associated with integrating the princely states meant that the Congress leadership were unwilling to launch into major administrative reform (Hansen 1999: 46). The political field that emerged bore many similarities with the colonial state and the dominant stream of the nationalist movement.

The elitist democracy of the first two decades after 1947 governed the masses as subjects of a benevolent state (Hansen 1999: 10). The ignorant and traditional masses would need to learn to fill their new role as secular citizens of the nation; if exposed prematurely to the world of modern politics, consumption, mobility and urban life the innocent masses would be corrupted by base desires for money and power and could be manipulated by criminal elements (Hansen 1999: 54). In the meantime it was the responsibility of the elite to prepare the masses through education, and ensure they did not obstruct national development (Hansen 1999: 47). In this era, commonly referred to in retrospect as the 'Nehruvian Golden Age', high politics began to be constructed as a 'virtuous vocation', "a practice wherein upper-caste notions of proper public conduct merged with the

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supposedly sublime personal qualities that freedom fighters, according to the dominant nationalist mythology, had acquired through the nationalist struggle" (Hansen 1999: 50). This marked a reversal of the pre-Independence nationalist discourse of a polluted political realm, but only for high politics; the colonial discourse of a low politics of clientelism and criminal elements threatening society and civilisation was appropriated by the indigenous elite at the time of independence (Hansen 1999: 51) as justification for continuing paternalism towards the masses. Mass participation in democratic processes and encounters with the new developmental schemes took place through local brokers (*dalals*), and political parties were not supposed to participate in elections for the Panchayati Raj system of community development councils, "in order not to contaminate and derail the process of supposedly unpolitical development work" (Hansen 1999: 51-2). Instead, community development was to be carried out by politically-neutral technical experts and "Gandhian-inspired community development organisations recruiting idealistic middle-class youth and retired bureaucrats for voluntary work in the villages" (Hansen 1999: 52).

These gestures gave birth led to a very influential notion of selfless social work, which, as we will see in this thesis, still exerts a lot of influence today (Hansen 1999: 52). In this model, the social worker is a responsible middle-class citizen who devotes himself to working among the masses for their uplift with no expectation of return. Such work is ennobling and purifying for the practitioner because it is located outside the profane political realm and involves "sustained contact with the true people" (Hansen 1999: 52). This model provides "an unassailable moral high ground to a certain genre of 'antipolitical activism,' conspicuous among social and cultural organisations" (Hansen 1999: 11-12). As with the nationalist movement's discourse on 'the people', this notion of social work relies on the masses simultaneously playing two contradictory roles: first, the true bearers of culture who inspire the social worker, and second, the objects of his civilising mission, backward 'plebeians' benefiting from contact with the "exemplary conduct and high ethical standards" of the middle-class social worker (Hansen 1999: 52). Following Gandhi's vision, such work should avoid direct conflict between the elite and oppressed groups within the villages, blocks or districts targeted (Kamat 2002: 16). The Nehruvian state's encouragement of this antipolitical social work was in stark contrast to the brutal suppression of communist and militant peasant mobilisation of oppressed groups against elites in the early post-independence period (Kamat 2002: 10).

The political field began to change at the end of the 60s. The classical Congress structure of the 'Nehruvian Golden Age' was an intricate but flexible system of institutional bargaining extending from local politics upward to the centre that enabled the negotiation of power, resources, and mandates among districts and between the states and the centre, and the accommodation of the interests of most elite groups (Hansen 1999: 135). This structure became weaker towards the end of the first two decades of independence, partly as a result of Nehru's death in 1964, the subsequent weakening of the ideological hegemony of the Congress party (Hansen 1999: 128), and Congress splitting in 1969 leaving the weaker fraction led by Indira Gandhi clinging to power. Mrs Gandhi set out to consolidate her position by creating a new parallel system of authority in the party that bypassed the classical Congress structure and relied on electoral populism to sustain the party's vote base. Ambitious but inexperienced politicians made fast careers in the political apparatus based on loyalty to Mrs Gandhi's personal leadership. 'Winners' – locally influential businessmen and wealthy peasants who could finance a campaign, or persons believed to be able to deliver electoral support from a particular community – were chosen to stand for election on the Congress ticket by those at the centre, bypassing

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the local party organisation. In this way candidates from non-upper-caste groups came onto the Congress ticket. In addition, Congress increasingly relied on 'electoral populism' based on effective slogans, lavish campaigning, organising elections around a few overriding emotional issues, and frequently positioning Congress "as the ally and protector of all depressed groups in their conflicts with local elites and upper-caste groups" (Hansen 1999: 135-6).

In this context, the construction of politics and public life reverted once more to the polluted realm it had been during the colonial period. Politics was increasingly seen as an 'immoral vocation', "a site of unprincipled pragmatism, corruption, nepotism, and greed – in brief, as the profane antithesis to the sublime qualities of the cultural realm" (Hansen 1999: 56). An increasing number of voices, including a radical student movement inspired by the 1968 movement in France (Kamat 2002: 12), rose in protest against the threat Mrs Gandhi was understood to be posing to democracy and against the perceived inadequacy of the government's response to an emerging economic crisis. These voices came together in opposition to Congress in the 'J.P. movement' under the leadership of the Gandhian reformer Jayaprakash Narayan, who took the discourse of a degradation of the political field as a sign of a more general decay of society, and called for a 'total revolution' of public morality in India and a new decentralised democracy from below. Political discourse was polarised, with both Mrs Gandhi and JP declaring the other a threat to India's democracy (Chandra 2003). The pressure on Mrs Gandhi led her to declare the Emergency in 1975, ban the opposition, and imprison large numbers of 'political dissidents', which put the latter in a position from which they could claim to be champions of democracy and freedom – willing to undergo imprisonment and persecution to sustain democracy (Hansen 1999: 57, 130-1). The Janata party that briefly took power when Mrs Gandhi called for elections in 1977 was to a large extent dominated by Morarji Desai, the erstwhile Congress leader whose disagreements with Mrs Gandhi had led to the Congress split in 1969; Desai's vision of restoring the political order of the Nehruvian 'Golden Age' of the 1950s exercised considerable influence on the entire political discourse of the period (Hansen 1999: 131).

These events left a deep impression on a generation of young middle-class people who had perhaps already begun to question the state but were radicalised by the Emergency. Many student activists answered JP's call for youth to go to the countryside to build a new democracy from below, establishing small groups dedicated to working in a limited number of villages organising the rural and low caste poor against the upper caste bureaucratic and landlord elite (Kamat 2002: 12). While some scholars dubbed these 'social action groups' (ref), Kothari (1984) coined the term 'non-party political formations', distinguishing them from the earlier category of anti-political voluntary agencies working on state development schemes referred to above (see also Sheth 1984: 261), but also emphasising that although their work was informed by a radical political agenda they distanced themselves from the government, political parties and their associated organisations.

4. Narratives of the 70s and 80s

The Lokayan narrative argues that the non-party political formations sought to build a new politics because the old politics was corrupt, while also increasingly performing roles "previously performed by government or by opposition parties and their front organisations" (Kothari 1984: 220) but now neglected by these actors; the ruling elites, having become 'root-less', make it necessary for politics to return to the 'grass-roots' in a

new form (Sheth 1984: 259). Kothari contextualised their emergence as occurring at a time of economic crisis,

> at a point of history when existing institutions and the theoretical models on which they are based have run their course, when there is search for new instruments of political action [...] alternative political spaces outside the usual arenas of party and government though not outside the State, [...] new forms of organisation and struggle meant to rejuvenate the State and to make it once again an instrument of liberation from exploitative structures. (1984: 219)

The non-party political formations did not undertake this search alone; the early 1970s also saw the emergence of a range of social movements across the country that rejected links with political parties as a result of the "growing and general distrust of politicians and a disillusionment with established politics" (Omvedt 1993: 116) and the belief that "[t]he front organisations connected to every political party – women's wings, student federations, trade unions, farmers' associations – usually lacked autonomy" (Jenkins 2010: 412). In her well-known study, Gail Omvedt identified the anticaste movement, women's movement, farmers' movement and environmental movement as 'new social movements' engaged in 'reinventing revolution' by taking up identities other than class as the basis for struggle (Omvedt 1993).[28]

A starting point for the second narrative is Hansen's analysis of the shift from seeing politics as a 'virtuous vocation' to an 'immoral vocation' in the 1970s (Hansen 1999). Hansen agrees with the first narrative that this shift was partly a reflection of concerns about the centralising tendencies of Congress under Mrs Gandhi, the increasing use of populist techniques of political mobilisation and governance, and the inadequacy of the government's response to various economic crises. Where he differs is by pointing out that the shift was *also* a reflection of the discomfort felt by the established upper-caste, middle-class elite with one of the consequences of the changes in the political field, namely the emergence of a new breed of public figures who come from peasant communities and lower-caste groups and whose "style, language, and social practices are decidedly more 'rustic' and 'plebeian'" than the middle-class politicians of the preceding generation: the ever more assertive seizure of the democratic process by genres of political discourse, styles and practices derived from the world of 'low' politics (Hansen 1999: 56). To the urban, educated middle-class, this seemed to signify the decay of public morality (Hansen 1999: 56), and JP became their champion by promising to respond with 'total revolution'.

In fact, Hansen argues, the emergence of these strata in the public sphere signifies "the less than orderly democraticisation of Indian democracy" (1999: 58), the wresting of it from the hands of a minority of middle-class citizens by various communities of the masses. Mrs Gandhi's 'popularisation' of political power facilitated this process, but another key factor was what Bardhan has called "the inevitable logic of an open pluralist polity, with its ever-widening circle of democratic awareness and raised aspirations [...] in the prevailing politics of scarcity" (Bardhan 1997: 192; see also Hansen 1999: 58-9). Here Hansen and Bardhan disagree with the argument of the 'culturalist critics' – see, as examples, Kaviraj (1991), Chatterjee (1993), Saberwal (1996) and Madan (1997), and for a discussion see Fuller and Harriss (2001: 8-10) – that the masses have failed to internalise the secular, impersonal values of the modern state because the nationalist leadership and Nehruvian state did not inculcate those values in them. On the contrary, the masses internalised those values in spite of "the many consistent attempts to control

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[28] The narrative articulated "a deep despair with existing political parties and the electoral process"; Leslie Calman cites the prominent activist Madhu Kishwar as "claiming that no self-respecting person would wish to be involved in electoral politics since they have become, in her words, the province of 'hoodlums'" (Calman 1989: 947).

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and limit the logic of democratic politics in India" by the elite, because the democratic order created by those elites "released new, assertive, and uncontrollable social identities that over time produced a form of modernity [...] that nobody ever envisaged" (Hansen 1999: 58-9).

At the same time, while he accepts that Mrs Gandhi's undermining of the classical Congress structure of institutional bargaining posed a threat to the democratic process, Hansen cautions against seeing the politics of the new social movements as necessarily opposed to Mrs Gandhi's populist system of governance. In particular, he argues that the success of agitations by farmers' movements such as those led by Tikait and Sharad Joshi was enabled by and contributed to this system, demonstrating "that extra-parliamentary campaigns on simply agendas were able to produce results, as the Congress party found it relatively less complicated to accommodate such precise demands than to deal with larger issues of structural reform" (Hansen 1999: 141).[29]

Drawing on this analysis I would argue that it makes a lot of sense to think of changes in the political field in the 1970s and 1980s in terms of the breaking of upper-caste middle-class dominance in the sphere of party politics and government, and their search for new spheres of political influence. To begin with, I note that the Lokayan concept of non-party political formations places agency in the hands of the middle-class activists who initiated such groups among the masses, maintaining the paternalistic relation between middle-class and masses normalised by the colonial state, nationalist movement and Nehruvian Golden Age. In addition, however, it modifies the model of those periods by positioning the middle-class agent as a social worker, outside the government and parties, outside these polluted elements of the system of rule, yet still attempting to influence that system of rule, seeking to build a new, pure democracy. It is here that the Lokayan narrative can be understood as not merely upper-caste, but as a specifically brahmanical narrative: insofar as it positions the academics of Lokayan and the middle-class activists of non-party political formations in the role of Brahman intellectuals and priests advising and regulating the rule of the Kshatriya ruler, claiming status on the basis of their wisdom, purity and position as representatives of the masses.

The Lokayan narrative also despaired of both the organised left and the far left. After the suppression of the communist-led agrarian uprisings of the early years of independence by Congress, the communist parties (the Communist Party of India (CPI) and, from 1962 onwards, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM)) adopted reformist positions, working within the party system and prioritising mobilisation of the organised working class of the urban formal sector over work with the rural poor or unorganised, informal sector of the urban working class (Kothari 1984: 220; Kamat 2002: 10; Omvedt 1993: 39-40). In the 1970s the size of the former category as a proportion of the working class was insignificant compared to the latter categories, whose living conditions were worse and more visible in the cities with the arrival of increasing numbers fleeing rural poverty. In addition, the revolutionary efforts of the radical communist factions (Maoist, Marxist-Leninist) who split with CPM at the end of the 1960s had placed the issues of the poor and landless peasants at the centre of national consciousness, and added the word 'Naxalite' to the political lexicon as a euphemism for militant and violent left-wing activity, after the violent movement that began in Naxalbari in West Bengal in 1967 (Jayal 2001a: 149n3). Sheth argued that such "chaotic and violent actions" by the poor are unsustainable, are easily labelled as 'extremist' and lose wider public support; he

[29] Hansen is of course not alone in offering this analysis; see Bardhan (1997: 191-2) for a similar account.

explained the trend towards such actions in terms of the decline of normal politics pushing the State towards increasingly coercive measures and pushing the increasingly desperate poor towards violence (Sheth 1984: 270).

In fact a number of my informants disagree with Sheth here and express sympathy for – if not engagement with – the armed struggle of the Naxalities, and it is worth pointing to a couple of reasons why this might be the case. First, the Naxalite movement is compatible with the Lokayan narrative on two points: it takes as its focus the elements of the working class that the communist parties, like the Nehruvian socialists of the Congress party, are not interested in: the poor peasants in rural areas, where "feudalism is the main contradiction" (Omvedt 1993: 41). Second, while Naxalite movement did involve a party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), as Ranabir Samaddar put it, "In a sense, the CPI (ML) was an antiparty" (Samaddar 1986: 20, cited in Omvedt 1993: 42), concerned with smashing the state rather than engaging in normal party politics (Omvedt 1993: 42). Third, the Naxalite movement was not only a class-based struggle, concerned with the exploitation of poor and landless peasants by landlords and other local elites; it was also a caste-based struggle, concerned with the oppression of the lower-castes by the higher-castes, in a context where both sets of power relations existed side-by-side. Whereas communists elsewhere took other identities to be of secondary importance to class, the Naxalites did not subsume caste under class. In this way, Omvedt could describe it as "in some ways the first 'new social movement' of India, although under fairly orthodox Marxist-Leninist clothing" (Omvedt 1993: 40).

An important element of the Lokayan narrative is the distinction between non-party political formations and anti-political voluntary agencies, but in this second narrative of the period we do not take this distinction at face value but examine it as a discursive construction. The 1970s and 1980s saw a surge in the number, resources and membership of organisations set up with the declared intention of engaging in non-political voluntary social work, and although there were a variety of reasons for this growth (see below), it is not insignificant that many of them were often dominated either by Brahmans or other middle-class minorities increasingly excluded from the political realm of government and parties. In a study of a small number of large non-political women's organisations in Madras (now Chennai) in the 1980s, Caplan suggested that in many respects the organisations "serve as a vehicle for a minority community, which was once dominant but is now eclipsed numerically and politically, to continue to wield a certain kind of power" (1985: 34). As an example, she examined the way in which the functions organised by one organisation provided an opportunity for the Brahman members of the organisation to network with politicians from the DMK and ADMK, the Dravidian nationalist regional parties dominant in the politics of Tamil Nadu state (1985: 184). Both Caplan and Hansen note that part of the reason politicians patronise the events and work of non-political voluntary agencies is because the construction of their social work as purifying and ennobling (see above) can "counterbalance the contamination inflicted upon [a politician] by the morally empty, or even degrading, involvement with power and money" (Hansen 1999: 52; see Caplan 1985: 185), and can serve to enhance the politician's credibility.

Another crucial element that the Lokayan narrative neglects is communalism, perhaps reflecting an unwillingness to acknowledge "certain commonalities in the values and perspectives of socialists and Hindu nationalists" (Kamat 2002: 12n11). Upper-caste discomfort with losing control of the public sphere provided fertile ground for the Hindu right. Relatively marginal to the political field until the 1970s, the Sangh parivar (Hindi:

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'family of associations', the term used to describe the organisations of the Hindu nationalist movement) grew in strength during this period, in no small part because of the new respectability and visibility they had gained from supporting the JP Movement and Janata party. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS or 'National Volunteers Society') had become deeply involved in the J.P. movement, and in return for their support, JP "endowed the RSS with a new public legitimacy by calling members of the organisation 'true patriots,' 'revolutionaries,' and so on" (Hansen 1999: 130). The political climate of the time had encouraged the Jana Sangh (the party formed in 1951 by the RSS, Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha leaders (Hansen 1999: 127)) to move towards a more centrist position (Hansen 1999: 129), and the Jana Sangh played a key role in securing an electoral victory for the Janata party in 1977 and formed the single largest contingent of MPs in the Lok Sabha (Hansen 1999: 131). However, the refusal of the RSS to provide manpower to the Janata party – which had been formed as a diverse coalition that agreed on little beyond the desire to remove Mrs Gandhi from power – "reactivated long-standing suspicions regarding the longer-term objectives of the Sangh parivar" (Hansen 1999: 132), contributed to the factional struggles that led to the collapse of the Janata government, and "provided a welcome stepping stone for a well-staged comeback of Congress as the only true protector of secularism in India" (Hansen 1999: 132). For the Hindu nationalist movement the fall-out of these events was twofold. First, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party: Indian People's Party) was formed as the new party of the RSS in 1980 (Hansen 1999: 133). Second, for much of the 1980s the RSS shared the suspicion of government and party politics articulated by the Lokayan narrative, and, leaving the BJP to develop relatively independently, concentrated on increasing the number, resources and membership of organisations set up with the declared intention of engaging in religious and cultural social work.

A final distinction needs to be made between the Lokayan narrative's portrayal of the non-party political formations as 'autonomous' – that is, more responsive to "local articulations of need" (Jenkins 2010: 414) because free of control by government or any party's agenda –and the critics who argued that their autonomy was jeopardised by their relationships with funding agencies. By positioning themselves as political organisations seeking to rejuvenate a corrupt State, they cut themselves off from the State funding that supported the supposedly non-political community development organisations discussed above, and had to find alternative ways of financing their activities. While some engaged in what Sheth characterised as a "valiant fight for autonomy" (1984: 262), relying only on their own resources, donations given without conditionality by sympathisers and membership fees from the community, others sought funding from non-State funding agencies in India (for example the Dorabji Tata Trust) and from outside. This became more difficult in 1976 when Mrs Gandhi introduced the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), allowing her government to deny access to foreign funding to organisations considered likely to threaten "the sovereignty and integrity of India, the public interest, freedom or fairness of election to any legislature, friendly relations with any foreign state, harmony between religious, racial, linguistic or regional groups, castes or communities" (cited in Jenkins 2010: 412). The FCRA contributed to the emergence of a sub-sector of resource-channelling organisations able to convince government officials of the non-political nature of their activities and objectives sufficiently to secure funding which would then be transferred to one or more non-party political formations. In some cases the resource-channelling organisation and the non-party political formation were a single organisation with two letterheads, in other cases separate organisations with different personnel, with the former comprising professionals with sufficient proficiency in English to secure funding from foreign donors in an increasingly competitive field and

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the latter more comfortable in the local vernacular. It should be emphasised that these sort of arrangements are the exception rather than the rule (although this cannot be statistically proven), so that for every Rs1000 routed to a people's organisation there must be millions going to other organisations doing non-political health work along with other things in 10 villages. In spite of this, Jenkins argues, these sort of arrangements have "come to be widely seen as synonymous with the entire NGO sector" and in fact mark "the origin of the contemporary meaning of NGO" both in terms of a value-neutral definition stressing "the 'channeling of funding' to grassroots and community groups, and in its pejorative sense – the NGO label deployed as a term of abuse by one civic group against another", and the emergence of "the now-familiar movement-NGO dichotomy" (Jenkins 2010: 415).

In this context NGOs came under attack from three angles. While the government – in particular Mrs Gandhi – condemned their activities as 'external subversion' (ref) against the government, the communist parties condemned them as an imperialist conspiracy to weaken the communist parties. The latter critique was made most forcefully and famously during the mid-1980s, in an article (Karat 1984) and later a book (Karat 1988) by Prakash Karat, a senior ideologue of CPM. A third critique came from activists and academics who, though often sympathetic to the Lokayan narrative's concept of virtuous 'autonomy', considered that most organisations claiming to be 'autonomous' were in fact controlled by the State and therefore apolitical or, worse, depoliticising, functioning to channel the legitimate anger and energy of the masses into non-political community development and thus serving the interests of the elite-dominated State and not serving the interests of the people (Duggal 1988; RUPE 2003).

There are three points I want to make here. First, the distinctions made are often questionable. With regard to the distinction between political movement work and non-political community development work, Gandhi saw constructive work as part of the nationalist movement, not depoliticising; we don't have to see the two as opposed. It becomes harder to draw the line; whereas the public transcripts of community development organisations were explicitly non-political and could be contrasted with those of political organisations, development discourse has gradually caught up with the people-centred and rights-oriented vocabulary of the movements of the 70s, and foreign funding agencies have started to fund rights organisations. Second, the distinctions made are usually self-serving. Jenkins (2010) suggests that Karat's polemic is transparently self-serving, absolving the communist parties of blame for failing to build a cohesive movement in rural areas by arguing that their efforts to do so had been undermined by foreign-funded organisations. Third, all three attacks portray these organisations as the *unwitting* tools of larger forces. The approach I take in my thesis seeks to give them back their agency and acknowledge the contingency and open-endedness of the situations and conditions in which they work. I argue that the effects of the actions these actors take depend on the presence or absence of other conditions to such an extent that they cannot simply be painted as black or white.

The complexity of the political field in which my informants are situated has only increased since the 1980s. While Indira Gandhi's last administration (DATES) and Rajiv Gandhi's administration began to move gradually from a State-centred development model towards a market-centred model, the intensity of the economic reforms initiated in 1991 posed new questions for activists trying to find ways to move forward; as Kamat put it, "who is to be defined as the enemy, now that the state is all set to recede from the public sphere?" (Kamat 2002: 9). For example, would criticism of the State's failure to

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deliver services only add support to those calling for their privatisation? In such circumstances, would a better approach be to work with the State to make specific policies and schemes work? (CSDS 1) On the other hand, the resurgence of the Naxalite movement over the last 10-15 years has led many activists previously committed to Gandhian nonviolent methods of satyagraha (truth-assertion) to wonder if armed revolution might be the path to follow in conditions of threat to people's survival and dignity.

To summarise, the historical period examined in the first four sections of the chapter saw efforts by a number of actors to define and differentiate between different types of action in the political field. While it was always a major concern of the State to differentiate between permissible and impermissible types of action, the State also differentiated between categories of people, and the actions permissible to each category differed. Finally, there were also efforts by the State and other actors – not least by academics and activists – to produce moral hierarchies of action. In this way the political field and field of social action in which the JSA community act is historically produced and as such offers a particular economy of stances. The positions adopted by my informants are shaped by a range of influences including the positions adopted by actors in the past, the practices of those actors, and the way in which their positions and practices have been interpreted and reinterpreted by different actors up until the present. These influences lead my informants to a range of possible positions, an economy of stances, and the position they adopt is also shaped by how it is possible to articulate a position as distinct from (and, preferably, superior to) the positions of other actors. This latter point is taken up elsewhere in the thesis, in particular in the Voluntarism chapter. At this point we shift our attention towards understanding the particular economy of stances produced by the health movement in India.

5. New Health Movements

The first four sections of this chapter examined the broad contours of the field of social action in India as they emerged over the past two centuries. This fifth section points to a number of developments contributing to the emergence of health movements in the period from the end of the Nehruvian Golden Age to the present. This is not a history of *the* health activist community, but *a* health activist community. It is the story of the collaborations and contacts between the different groups who came together in 2000 for the first India People's Health Assembly. As such it is a corrective to those who might think that the Assembly in 2000 and the subsequent formation of the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* was the point at which this community emerged, or the first meaningful collaboration within this community. This argument takes forward the argument of the earlier sections of this chapter by illustrating how not only are the political field and the economy of stances within it historically produced, but the economy of stances within a much smaller space – the JSA community – is also historically produced.

The community health movement might be traced back to the nineteenth-century Christian missionary groups mentioned at the start of the first part of this chapter, but as noted in the quote at the beginning of the chapter it was to a large extent events taking place elsewhere in the world that inspired the surge of community health experiments in India in the 1960s and 1970s. While most of the early Christian missionaries – such as the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) and the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) – based their work around the building of mission hospitals and dispensaries in rural areas and provision of medical care, in the late 60s to early 70s in

India there was a transition from this institutional approach towards a community health approach. This new approach was inspired by programmes such as the barefoot doctors of Mao's China and the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, and strongly identified with two aspects: first, training community members as semi-professional healthworkers, and second, getting the communities to take ownership of their health by forming committees on health issues. The formation of the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) in 1970 reflected both this change of approach by the Christian organisations and the increasing numbers of non-Christian medical professionals moving to rural areas and adopting the new approach; as Dr Ramanathan[30] of Community Health Cell (CHC) put it, the formation of VHAI was "an effort to bring all the community health-oriented people in the country together" (Interview transcript). A large number of publications and grey literature have examined these experiments (see, for example, the VHAI *Anubhav* series, Antia and Bhatia 1993; Pachauri ref; Narayan 1999a; Sundararaman 2003).

Dr Ravi Narayan of Community Health Cell (CHC) has argued that until the late 1970s many of the community health innovators shared a perspective that "believed that the panacea for all health problems had been found in the 'alternative approach' utilising non-professionals [i.e. village health workers] and appropriate technology and some micro-level management innovation" (Narayan 1992: IV-1). He contrasted this group's "ill founded euphoria" with the "inactive cynicism" of a second group who "understood the real cause of ill health as being rooted in the present economic-political system" and "believed that nothing can be done or should be done unless the present economic-political system could be changed" (Narayan 1992: IV-1; see also Duggal 1988: 636). Given the analysis in the earlier sections of this chapter it should not come as too much of a surprise that Narayan associates the first group with the non-party voluntary agencies of the 1970s and the second group with the party left; neither should it come as a surprise that I believe this to be a reductionist simplification obscuring a more complex reality of alliances and linkages. More significantly, however, Narayan also associates the former perspective with the Gandhian activist Dr N.H. Antia, and the latter with the Marxist sociologist Dr Debabar Banerji. Dr Antia had left a lucrative career as a cardiologist to work for the health of the rural masses, taking the thought of the famous Gandhian J.P. Naik as an influence and setting up the Foundation for Research in Community Health (FRCH). His rise to prominence in the emerging community health movement was partly a result of his involvement in the committees that produced *Alternative Approaches to Healthcare* (??? 1976) and the ICSSR/ICMR (Indian Council of Social Science Research/Indian Council of Medical Research) report *Health for All: An Alternative Strategy* (Ramalingaswami 1980), both of were policy-oriented reports which drew heavily on the experiences of the community health movement to present alternative approaches to the government of India's centralised, top-down model of healthcare provision (see Damodaran 1979; Srinivasan 2003: 98). In the 1970s and 1980s Dr Banerji founded the Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health (CSMCH) at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and published a number of key sociological studies of health and healthcare in India (1971, 1982, 1985, 1986). I would argue that the paths taken by Antia and Banerji did present themselves as two contrasting starting points for the health activists of this period.

An important element in bringing these two groups together was the Medico Friends Circle (MFC). In April 1971 (i.e. the first month of the Bangladesh Liberation War in which East Pakistan, with support from India, defeated West Pakistan and became

[30] Name changed.

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Bangladesh) the Tarun Shanti Sena (Tarun??? Peace Army), a Gandhian organisation, had organised a sanitation camp for Bangladeshi refugees at the West Bengal border (Weber 1996: 127). The camp was visited by JP Narayan. According to Dr Ramanathan, JP commended the medicos working in the camp and said the following:

> When you become doctors, *that* is when you must continue to be a radical. Now as young students you will join the movement, and say social revolution and all that, but when you become doctors you'll go and start making money or worrying about your careers. So why don't you form a friend's circle that continues to worry about the type of healthcare, medical education relevant to the larger majority of the poor of the country? (Dr Ramanathan, interview transcript)

In response the medicos formed MFC in 1974.[31] Ramanathan explained that many members of the initial MFC group had "Gandhian backgrounds, because all their parents are well-known Gandhians" (Interview transcript), but as they allowed anybody to join, soon there were many leftists in MFC. Banerji and others at CSMCH were involved from the outset (Banerji 1976). In an interview, Ramanathan explained the significance of the MFC meetings and its Bulletin in the radicalisation of the community health movement. He pointed out that "if a doctor or a nurse goes [into rural social work] with a professional background, even if they are oriented towards community health and primary health care, they land up providing medical service and the medical service absorbs them more and more, because they're trained as that" (Interview transcript; see also CHC undated). In such cases, despite the shift away from the institutional approach it remains difficult to prevent the reproduction of the divide between the bearers of a specialist knowledge of health that comes from medical training and those non-specialists who become the subjects and populations with whom the specialists are concerned. The MFC provided a space for problematising such experiences in community health and developing responses to them, which some of my informants conceptualised as a shift from a community health approach to a more radical people's health approach characterised by a stronger emphasis on participatory democracy (Interview transcript). The MFC network today has a very broad network and "has played a unique role in developing critical thinking regarding the Health sector in India" (Shukla 2007: 14). It was able to do so because it was a 'friends' 'circle' in which people came together to discuss issues rather than ideologies, so that while ideology shaped individual perspectives on issues, ideology was not the focus of discussion.

MFC also provided an important space for Indian health activists to interact with other activist individuals and groups. It provided a space for interaction with health activists from other countries, for example Ivan Illich, David Sanders, Dave Nabarro, and David Werner; Illich apparently declared the MFC Bulletin the best third world periodical analysing health structure and its problems (Narayan and Narayan 1984: 9). MFC's decision to undertake studies on health-related aspects of the Bhopal disaster in 1984 (ref) brought the community health movement into contact with activists associated with the left parties, women's groups, the environmental movement, trade unions, and the emerging science movement.

From the early 1950s onwards a number of organisations had emerged with the aim of creating scientific awareness among the general public.[32] Of these, the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) grew into a mass organisation in the 1960s and 1970s (Ramachandran 2004). In the aftermath of the Bhopal disaster, Eklavya (a Bhopal-based 'people's science' organisation) and KSSP took the lead in organising the science groups

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[31] The story of its formation is found in the MFC Bulletin's 100th issue.
[32] On the People's Science Movement in Maharashtra see Phadke (1980).

in the Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha at the end of 1987 with the support of the Department of Science and Technology, and the following year the All-India People's Science Network (AIPSN) was formed. Parameswaran (undated) writes that the Government of India approached KSSP to organise a jatha on literacy in early 1988 and the National Literacy Mission was born that year as a partnership between government and the non-government agencies of AIPSN, with a new science movement organisation formed in 1989 to take the project forward. That organisation was the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) (Saldanha ref). After the National Literacy Mission, some groups within AIPSN/BGVS (a way of referring to these groups that is in common usage within JSA) began to focus more on health, in particular decentralised health planning and work on drugs.[33]

The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of a number of other organisations and networks that facilitated communication and collaboration between the members of this emerging health activist community. The All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN) was formed in 1981, bringing together science movement organisations with a number of other organisations to advocate for a rational drug policy and to increase access and improve the rational use of essential medicines (Shukla and Phadke 1999). A number of individuals and groups active within the women's movement took up issues related to population control, in particular the controversial usage of the injectable contraceptive drug Depo-Provera (see on this Sathyamala ???; *MFC Bulletin* no. 65, May 1981; Sarojini *et al.* 2006: 55-61). In 1984 Ravi and Thelma Narayan formed Community Health Cell (CHC) in Bangalore with the idea that the organisation could act as a network 'hub' for the community health initiators across the country that the couple had visited in the previous year (CHC undated); as they put it, the 'community' of CHC would be the community of community health initiators (ref). More than just a network 'hub', though, Ravi and Thelma had a vision for CHC derived from a year spent visiting community health projects: their position was that it is not necessary that community health action has to mean "a clinic or a doctor or a nurse"; "we are quite happy if [someone] has never used a stethoscope in his life and is busy organising the local people, community health action doesn't have to be always additional to medical action" (Interview transcript). A group of radical health activists who had worked together in Dr Antia's Foundation for Research in Community Health (FRCH) formed the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) in Mumbai in 1994, positioning their organisation in opposition to depoliticising NGO research organisations on the one hand and apolitical academic research on the other (CEHAT 2001: 1). I would tentatively suggest that in framing these two categories CEHAT had in mind Dr Antia (and FRCH) and Dr Banerji (and CSMCH) respectively. Against these approaches CEHAT defined its agenda as research, advocacy, services and action, seeking to occupy a key point within the emerging health activist community "at the interface of academia and people" (CEHAT 2001: 59).

By the end of the 1990s the points of contact between this emerging health activist community and the autonomous people's organisations that had grown up since the 1970s were still limited. The health networks, while not formally linked with the non-health movements and networks, nevertheless knew them; but there was still a divide between the 'doctor-dominated' health activist groups and the 'social science-oriented' development activist groups such as Chipko, "a failure of community health projects to see themselves as part of a larger socio-political change process in society and the failure of political activists, mass organisations and people's movement [*sic*] to recognise the

[33] Raina (2004) writes that the PSM "consists of a large number of science professionals – engineers, doctors, scientists and many teachers" working with communities (2004: 12). Note that Vinod Raina is one of the founder's of the PSM, and leader? of Eklavya.

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value and true meaning of health" (Narayan 1992: VI-1).; see also Narayan 1999b). After Alma Ata the development activists also began to talk of health as a right, but they were seen as starting from the environment or feminist issues and then reaching health among other related social rights, whereas the health activists were starting from health and moving towards other issues. Nevertheless two points of contact stand out. First, a group of health activists in Maharashtra who from 1995 onwards started trying to incorporate health initiatives into the work of people's organisations, initially with no funding and from 1998 onwards as the Arogya Sathi project of CEHAT (CEHAT 2001: 38-40; Shukla and Phadke 1999). Second, a group of health activists who worked with the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM – Movement for the liberation of Chhattisgarh) to set up the Shahid Hospital in 1983 (Krishna Ananth 2004).[34] One of these doctors, Binayak Sen, has also been very involved in MFC and in the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), a major network of people's organisations in India formed in 1996 [and closely associated with Mehda Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan].

In summary, the last three decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a relatively coherent health activist community in India. The personal biographies of many of the individuals who were part of that community had a lot in common. Many of them came from middle-class elite, Brahmin backgrounds, had been trained as medical professionals, and had at some point decided to pursue social work rather than the significantly more secure and lucrative career paths open to them in public or private sector healthcare provision. Yet despite these commonalities there were significant differences in where and how they made this decision. While some had made this decision after years or decades of a 'normal' career as a medical professional, many had been radicalised as students either by the JP movement or the student organisations or the communist parties (in particular CPM's Student Federation of India (SFI)). Moreover, many had in fact not given up a 'normal' career, but engaged in voluntary action around their work and family commitments; this was particularly the case for many members of MFC and the science movement organisations. The form and content of their voluntary action differed significantly. While many saw themselves as building on Gandhi's combination of constructive work and awareness-raising activities, others focused more on policy critique, and some formed partnerships with a government increasingly open to collaboration with certain types of civil society organisation. Others saw themselves as more radical and, committed to a model of social change based on raising the political consciousness of the masses and organising them for mass action, focused their efforts on integrating health initiatives into the work of organisations that seemed to be following this agenda.

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[34] The Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM – Movement for the liberation of Chhattisgarh) emerged out of struggles at the Bhilai Steel Plant in Dalli Rajhara in central India. The Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS – Association of Mine Workers of Chhattisgarh) was formed at the end of the Emergency as a trade union of casual wage labourers frustrated by the failure of the All India Trade Union Congress (affiliated to CPI) and Indian National Trade Union Congress (affiliated to Congress) to take up their issues of low wages and exploitative work conditions (Chandhoke 2003: 215-17). In addition to taking up these issues, CMSS formed CMM in 1978-9 and turned its attention to other aspects of workers' well-being, campaigning against the liquor barons and setting up schools where there were none (Chandhoke 2003: 227). CMM also built the Shahid Hospital (inaugurated in 1983) and ran a health awareness campaign locating the problem of health in a social and economic context (Chandhoke 2003: 228). Chandhoke writes that CMM has been involved in the electoral process since 1977, but although it has fielded candidates, "*winning elections has never been its objective*" (Chandhoke 2003: 232, emphasis in original).

Conclusion

Gail Omvedt writes that "[t]he Congress party came to power in 1947 after leading one of the longest and most mass-based non-Communist third world independence movements" (Omvedt 1993: 28). What this chapter has tried to show is how this history has shaped the political field in India and influenced the emergence of the health activist community which is the focus of my PhD thesis. Even before the nationalist movement began to take off in the early twentieth century, the field of social action bore the contours of the double discourse imposed by the colonial state. The distinction between the middle-class elites and the masses did not disappear with the nationalist movement or with independence, but was reinterpreted by successive generations of political actors in light of the demands placed on them by the environment in which they operated. Alongside this distinction emerged another, that between the political and the cultural. This chapter has tried to show how this latter distinction should not be taken as stable or as a given, but should be understood as an important tool in the hands of different actors who used it to divide actors into different categories as their interests demanded.

In the final section of the chapter, the two key elements of the preceding analysis – on the one hand, the interpretive grid of these two binary oppositions (middle-class/masses and politics/culture), and on the other, the poststructuralist interpretation of these categories as tools in the hands of different actors – provide a framework for understanding the successive developments leading to the emergence of the JSA community. Each generation of activists defined themselves in opposition either to the preceding generation and/or to some other category in their own generation. The community health initiators of the 1960s and 1970s saw their work as engaging with the masses in a way that the work of earlier hospital-based missionaries had not, their critics argued that their understanding of the economic-political system was inadequate, and the next generation – in particular, CHC and CEHAT – positioned themselves in opposition to both the 'extremes' of Antia and Banerji. In the meantime, other activists reached a health agenda from different starting points: some began with the agenda of science, some with a concern for women's health, and others with the livelihoods issues of the environmental movement, autonomous labour organisations such as CMM, or the people's organisations of NAPM. Hidden within and beneath these categories were other divisions, perhaps most significantly that between the party and non-party left.

Finally what we come to see is that there is also a crucial division between the health activists on the one hand and the masses on the other. With few exceptions the health activist community is made up of individuals originating in the elite. They are middle-class and upper-caste, many are Brahmin, and many have high levels of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu ref), in particular fluency with written and spoken English. They work for the masses, they seek to reach out to and work with organisations of the masses, and many of them consciously try to avoid the paternalism built into the relation between middle-classes and masses since the double discourse of the colonial state.

This analysis is a crucial foundation on which I build an account of the JSA community. As I argued in the introduction to this thesis, it is only by taking into account the categories that define the political field and the economy of stances faced by a group of activists that we can hope to understand the stories they tell about their field of action and their work. The Lokayan narrative is radically different to that of Prakash Karat, and without understanding that JSA has members spread across a spectrum of positions between these two we cannot make sense of why a particular individual explains JSA in the way the s/he does. However, this is only the first strand of my argument; the second

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strand draws attention to the other influences on how a particular individual explains JSA, which depend less on how that individual is positioned *vis-a-vis* the Lokayan or Karat narrative, and far more on how that individual is positioned *vis-a-vis* other actors in his or her immediate vicinity. This second strand becomes more visible in the next chapter of my thesis.

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3. "Rashomon": Histories of the Jan Swasthya Sabha (People's Health Assembly)

Introduction

> Your focus is on the anthropology rather than the history of JSA, right? Because I think building a history from what people remember about 7 or 8 years ago is quite problematic. (Member of the JSA National Coordination Committee, fieldnotes)

This chapter focuses on the health for all campaign in the year 2000 that led to the formation of *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (JSA) (Hindi: People's Health Movement). When I look back over my interview transcripts and fieldnotes for narratives of the campaign, one of the most striking images is of a woman "running round with the Charter, hugging it to her chest, scared that if she gave it to someone they would change it" (Interview transcript). The woman was Chalapathi,[35] and the Charter was the Indian People's Health Charter, a consensus document produced as part of the campaign. Chalapathi explained to me that she got involved in drafting the Charter when she expressed criticisms of an early version circulated among those involved in the campaign, and was invited to revise it. She held onto it until it was necessary for her to give it up so that it could be finalised, at which point, she claims, others significantly changed it. Some of my other informants indicated that they could not see why Chalapathi made such a fuss about the Charter. In a telephone interview, one said, "I thought, 'It's only words, it's not even a legal document'," suggesting that Chalapathi "thought it was like the American Constitution...she didn't realise it was not setting up a country but just a set of demands" (Notes from interview). The importance Chalapathi attached to the Charter was all the more difficult to understand given that after working on the Charter, Chalapathi had nothing more to do with JSA. Why, then, did the Charter matter so much to her? Over lunch, she explained that it was because JSA "is a national network, it claims to be of the people, and so the Charter should stand up to political scrutiny" (Notes from interview).

I begin the chapter with this story as an illustration of the struggles that take place over words, phrases, statements and narratives. My attention was drawn to these struggles early on in my fieldwork when two of my informants warned me that if I went round interviewing those involved in JSA I should not expect them to tell the same story as each other. The first one, who predicted I would get a "Rashomon-kind of a rendering of how we see the JSA as individuals", was mentioned in the Introduction of my thesis. The second one, Amrith, put it slightly differently, suggesting that the small number of JSA members based in Pune and Gujarat who I had spoken to before speaking to him would all be articulating "the same story, the same history of JSA", while "the Bangalore and Delhi crowds" would tell different stories; "All CHC [Community Health Cell, Bangalore] will tell the same story as each other", he said (Fieldnotes).

How should the differences between narratives be explained? And how should they be presented in the texts produced by a researcher? There are at least three possible answers to the first question: narrators might sometimes be mistaken (i.e. they get the facts wrong), narrators might make inaccurate generalisations on the basis of their own particular experience (as in the story of blind men disagreeing about the nature of an elephant because each is touching a different part of the animal), and narrators might choose an interpretation of events that suits their interests (as in the story of Rashomon,

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[35] Most of the names in this thesis, including this one, have been changed.

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where each character stands to gain if the story they present is accepted as the truth).[36] The second question can be answered in many ways, but one way it *cannot* be answered is in the style of Rashomon, with the researcher presenting different narratives without indicating which one s/he thinks the reader should favour. A true "Rashomon-kind of a rendering" is impossible: at a minimum the researcher needs to edit interview material in order to translate from the spoken word into a written form by excluding noise and producing a text that is readable,[37] and this already involves interpretation and steers the reader towards the researcher's way of seeing things. Keeping this in mind, this chapter nevertheless takes inspiration from Rashomon insofar as the story the chapter tells emphasises disagreement between narratives in order to demonstrate what such an emphasis can offer to the analysis of activist networks. This demonstration takes place during the course of the chapter's discussion of how the JSA came together.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each of which focuses on one point of divergence between narratives in order to develop the argument in different ways. The first section argues that divergence between narratives of the origins of the Indian campaign illuminate contemporary struggles for power within JSA. The second section references controversies about the national health assembly that was the culmination of the campaign in a discussion of the typologies my informants used to explain who took part in the campaign. The third section takes inspiration from Bruno Latour's *Aramis* (1996) in its articulation of the narratives of 'non-human actors' in the campaign as an illustration of how all activist narratives rely on certain exclusions.

1. Origins

In the 1970s a concept of public health as 'Primary Health Care' emerged through a large number of community-led health projects taking place in rural areas in developing countries. This concept crystallised in the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration of 'Health for All by the Year 2000', backed by WHO and UNICEF and signed by governments across the world. The Alma Ata Declaration identified health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The Declaration stated that if universal health is to be achieved, medicine must attend to social, economic, and political needs, and claimed that health so defined was a fundamental human right. By implication, the practice of medicine demands activism and political will (Adams 1998: 3). Health activists hailed Alma Ata as the birth of a new paradigm, but the euphoria did not last long. Almost immediately, UNICEF shifted to a concept of 'Selective Primary Health Care' (SPHC) based around top-down vertical disease control programmes, and it proved difficult to interest WHO member-states in what activists began to call 'Comprehensive Primary Health Care' in order to distinguish the content of the original idea from UNICEF's less radical SPHC.

The WHO's annual World Health Assembly in Geneva is a space in which health activists from around the world try to exert influence, but the scope for doing so is limited. The Assembly is a meeting of government delegates, and anyone who is not a government delegate and wants to enter must do so as a representative of an organisation.

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[36] Of course, the identities between narratives can also be explained in a variety of ways. Amrith, for example, was already implying one explanation when he suggested that individuals from the same 'crowd' would tell the same story, i.e. would narrate identically.

[37] A stickler for accuracy might point out that a researcher could just collect audio recordings and present those, but in response it could be argued that such an approach would not be accepted by examiners of a PhD thesis.

Thus there are two avenues for those seeking to exert influence. The first is indirect: lobby government delegates to say what you want said. Here activists lack the financial clout of the drug companies. The second is direct: make a statement. Whereas government delegates can stand up at any time and say what they want, others have to give a statement to the chairperson of a session 24 hours beforehand, and if there is time after all the government delegates have spoken, they will be able to speak. This means it is impossible for them to make a statement that responds to points made in the discussion among government delegates. In the 1990s, a group of health activists associated with international NGOs and networks frustrated with this arrangement decided to organise an alternative forum for airing their grievances. Their idea was to hold a one-off People's Health Assembly to mark the fact that the year 2000 had come and 'Health for All by the Year 2000' had not been achieved.

Dr Ramanathan of Community Health Cell Bangalore (CHC) became involved with this group. Talking to me in his office in Bangalore he contrasted the idea of a people's health assembly with the World Health Assembly:

> people's voices must be given prominence, so it's not a group of 'experts on behalf of the people' who gather. The assembly must be full of representatives from communities, and from indigenous people and trade unions, and the so-called experts, including all of us radicals, would be asked to respond to the stories of the people, not to give our pre-conceived powerpoint presentations. So there would be stories from Zimbabwe, Philippines, from wherever, around themes, and the themes would be what's happening to [the] environment in those countries, what's happening to women's health in those countries or whatever. Apart from that we had workshops around issues that people identified, and those issues would identify action points, not just platitudes, and those action points would then feed into the [People's Health] Charter. The idiom of the assembly would be slightly different from the formality [of the World Health Assembly]: it would be informal, there would be singing and dancing, stories, puppet shows, and there would not be a hierarchy of technical/non-technical, medical/non-medical, all of us would just go as citizens of our country, not in our public health or professional capacities. So it didn't matter if you were a medical student and I was a professor and somebody was a trade union leader and somebody was a journalist, we didn't necessarily have to say we were this or that, we were just all interested in health, and so that was the whole mood of the Assembly. (Interview transcript)

The first moment of divergence in my informants' narratives relates to the question of the connection between these plans for an international People's Health Assembly and the idea of a campaign in India. At this time, many of those involved in planning for the People's Health Assembly were also attempting to build a civil society network that could coordinate civil society interactions with the WHO, called the International Poverty and Health Network (IPHN). In November 1999 IPHN met in Bangalore, and Dr Ramanathan suggested that a key moment in the story came at that point, with the discovery by those in the IPHN meeting that the science movement groups BGVS (Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti) and AIPSN (All India People's Science Network) were hosting a meeting at the same time in the same building, and the decision to ask the science movement to coordinate a campaign in India to build for the PHA. As he put it,

> there were no memorandums of understanding or declaration of intent at that time, those of us who were helping to make that decision had just presumed [that] because at the national level the BGVS is only a small representation of the whole national working group [asking BGVS to coordinate is] like asking CHC to host the global secretariat [of PHM] or asking CEHAT to host JSA's [secretariat]: they don't automatically become the leaders or the head of the thing. (Interview transcript)

Some of those in AIPSN offered a different story. At this time Dr Lakshmanan was working with Shivanandan on a community health programme of Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF), a member organisation of AIPSN, and discussing how to scale up the programme (this is discussed further in the Engagements and Models chapters of my

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thesis). Lakshmanan was a senior figure within AIPSN, and Shivanandan a young volunteer whose work with TNSF was financially supported by the Association for India's Development (AID). Shivanandan suggested to me that a major reason he and Lakshmanan decided to get involved in coordinating the Indian campaign in 2000 was that they saw that such a campaign would complement the expansion of the TNSF health programme, in particular because it would offer national exposure and opportunities to learn from other community health organisations and networks. The different capacities of the different groups involved in the campaign led Shivanandan to conceptualise it as "almost two parallel things": on the one hand, a campaign mobilising health activists, and on the other, a "larger campaign that reaches villages". While all those involved in organising the campaign would have a say in decisions relating to form and content, it would primarily be AIPSN going to the villages because AIPSN had the capacity to do so, and it was Lakshmanan and Shivanandan who would take responsibility for coordination. As Shivanandan explained, although it was not formally decided the campaign secretariat would be in Chennai, "it was Chennai from the beginning, or Chennai and Pondicherry. I was in Chennai, Lakshmanan in Pondicherry. Everything would be done through Chennai, we had an office [there]. But effectively the thing was coordinated by Lakshmanan" (Notes from interview).

Others raised questions about the role of AIPSN in the campaign. For example, in a discussion with Rajiv,[38] a non-AIPSN member of the JSA's National Coordination Committee (NCC), I suggested that a decision had been made that AIPSN/BGVS would coordinate the campaign in 2000. Rajiv responded that he did not recall this decision being made in the period since his organisation, a health NGO, became involved in the campaign. Along similar lines, several of my other non-AIPSN informants expressed disbelief when I suggested that there had ever been a Chennai-based secretariat.

For social science scholars influenced by the genealogies of Nietzsche and Foucault, the pursuit of origins is always already tied up with an intentional or unintentional project of power, "an attempt to capture the exact, and pure, essence of things" as Foucault put it, before warning that "he who listens to history finds that things have no pre-existing essence, or an essence fabricated piecemeal from alien forms" (1991: 78). Foucault encourages us to pay attention to the *effects* of a particular history, an emphasis that is relevant here. While we cannot know the intentions of actors and therefore cannot ascertain precisely why actors say what they say, we *can* identify the possible effects of what they say. For example, it is not difficult to identify some possible explanations for Rajiv's statement. The most pertinent one is that it is almost certainly true, as his organisation's involvement in the campaign began after the January meeting in Chennai where the discussion of coordination probably took place. Another is that Rajiv, like anyone else, might have forgotten a discussion that took place nine years ago and for which no official record is available (none of my informants was able to make the minutes of the Chennai meeting available to me). The examination of possible explanations such as these could be taken as a basis for adjudicating between rival narratives and asserting what seems to be the most likely sequence of events. However, following Foucault I would argue that for the purposes of understanding the JSA the pursuit of origins is less useful than a focus on the significance of divergence between narratives of those origins.

[38] Name changed.

Recent work by Tara Schwegler (Forthcoming) on the policy narratives of World Bank officials and Mexican policymakers offers a useful reference point for developing such an argument. Researching pension reform in Mexico in the 1990s, Schwegler encountered differing accounts of "who was responsible for the reform and the conditions to which it responded" (Forthcoming: 2), with World Bank officials declaring the structural inevitability of shifting from public to private sector schemes and claiming they had prompted the Mexican government to action, and Mexican policymakers emphasising that the reform "was a home-grown response to an historically specific constellation of factors" (Forthcoming: 20). Schwegler's paper focuses on the divergence between these two accounts, arguing that this focus reveals frequently overlooked aspects of the Mexican political field and the relationship between Mexican policymakers and World Bank officials. Far from a straightforward contest over who can claim credit for the reforms, Schwegler suggests that what is at stake is who can claim a superior understanding of Mexico's economic, political and social situation and the flaws in the pension system that made its reform necessary – because whoever can claim this will be able to exert more control over the domestic policy agenda.

Similarly, it would be possible to limit my explanation of divergences between the accounts offered by different health activists to acknowledgment of their status as blind men round an elephant; but not knowing the intentions behind their statements does not have to limit my explanation in this way – because my ethnography makes it possible to draw attention to the *effects* of the divergences between accounts. On the basis of my fieldwork I would suggest that it makes little difference to Shivanandan whether he succeeds or fails in persuading anyone that his is the true or most plausible narrative, because he has not been actively involved in JSA after the campaign in 2000. In contrast, I would suggest that for Ramanathan and Rajiv it does make a difference whether others believe their narrative or not. Like Shivanandan, Ramanathan has had little involvement with JSA since 2000. The focus of his work in this period has been strengthening the international PHM network, in particular as global coordinator of the PHM from 2003-5. His story of how JSA came together played – and continues to play – an important role in his visits to other countries, where he meets local health activists and encourages them to join PHM and use it as a platform for action. Talking to me in Bangalore, he explained, "everywhere I went I shared the Indian experience, because that was the only experience I had, always telling people that this may or may not apply [in your country]" (Interview transcript). On this basis I would suggest that it does matter for Ramanathan if others do or do not believe the narratives he tells them. It matters for Rajiv too, but for different reasons. In this thesis I argue that at the time I conducted my fieldwork two factions were engaged in a struggle over the future of JSA, with one faction made up of AIPSN/BGVS members and sympathisers and the other faction made up of non-AIPSN/BGVS members of JSA hostile towards AIPSN/BGVS. These factions differed in their views on what JSA should be and what role it should play in the contemporary political field in India; Rajiv's views on these subjects place him in the non-AIPSN camp. In this thesis I argue that to some extent the fortunes of either faction depend on their capacity to draw others within JSA to their cause, their ability to persuade others to join them. Seen from this perspective, it is in the interest of members of both factions to emphasise the significance of their faction's role in the history of JSA and downplay the significance of the other faction's role – particularly because this is what they might expect members of the other faction to do – and this is what Rajiv's statement does.

My point here is not that the intentions of my informants can be deduced from the consequences of their actions, because they clearly cannot. I cannot claim that any of my

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informants deliberately offered me narratives they knew to be misleadingly incomplete and partial truths, because I have no evidence with which to substantiate such a claim. But it is not my objective to make such a claim; rather, my objective is to argue, like Schwegler, that an analytical approach which focuses on the divergences between narratives can contribute to our understanding of the object of study.

Nevertheless, a focus on the divergences between actors' narratives should not lead us to lose sight of what is central to those narratives, which is the processes by which these actors and others were brought together in a common project *in spite of* the differences between them. Here the divergences between the narratives serve as a useful reminder of Latour's suggestion that we should be wary about any attempt to attribute too much to any single actor (Latour 1988 ref) – because each actor's narrative is likely to do precisely this. As Latour explains, "[t]o simplify its task, every group tends to think that its own role is most important, and that the next group in the chain just needs to concern itself with the *technical* details" – which means there is unlikely to be consensus between groups "about the length, importance, and order of phases" (1996: 67, emphasis in original). In fact every actor or group's ideas about what was most important might add to our understanding of what made the campaign possible.

While Dr Ramanathan and CHC appear to have acted as an important catalyst in putting forward the science movement as a candidate for coordinating the campaign and bringing together a group of participants in the IPHN in January, Dr Lakshmanan seems to have played a major part in expanding that group and making the campaign real over the following months. As he put it, "when there was no money, when it looked like a bit of a dreamlike thing, it won't take off – at that time I toured every state, whipping up the support, going to Raipur, going to Bhopal, going to Kolkata, talking people in, meeting the groups" (Interview transcript). A key point in Lakshmanan's narrative is that it was during that period that he convinced others to participate, and that he did so through charisma alone – as participants would need to find funding for themselves. He explained to me that at the second planning meeting in Hyderabad on 6 April 2000 "the question was asked, 'Where will the funding come from?' We asserted there will be no funding for this, we will have to do it through networking. Lots dropped out as a result" (Notes from interview). There is an important subtext here about the relationship between funding and purity of intention which is examined in detail in the next chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that in Lakshmanan's narrative the absence of funding made many reluctant to commit, and so it was his efforts at persuasion during this period that constituted the bulk of the work: "June-July it started turning around. By November in the main hall there everyone was on stage and everyone was pretending they had thought of it, and to some extent they had thought of it but they had not believed, had not fought for it, not at the time when it was in its pits" (Interview transcript).

Lakshmanan's narrative raises a key question of authorship, which we can understand better by looking at some other accounts of events during the first half of 2000. One of my informants told me that in the discussions about who should coordinate the campaign, the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) had been considered but ultimately rejected in favour of AIPSN/BGVS due to concerns that if VHAI took this responsibility they would sideline other participants. Shivanandan and Ramanathan explained that similar concerns animated the production of a series of booklets associated with the campaign (NCC 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2000e). The five booklets "outline the health consequences of globalisation and structural adjustment programmes imposed by international lending organisations on poor countries such as India" and serve "as primers

on the subject of globalisation and health" (Srinivasan 2003: 98). Each comprises a number of sections written by individuals – as "something to offer", as Ramanathan put it (Interview transcript) – and edited mainly by Shivanandan, but the booklets are attributed to the National Coordination Committee (NCC) for the Jan Swasthya Sabha (JSS) (People's Health Assembly). Shivanandan explained that "the problem with NGOs is if one participates and gets their name there, the others won't get involved, [so] in the first edition it just had all the [networks] of JSS [listed] because the whole point was we wanted everyone to be part of it, everyone contributed contents" (Notes from interview). Ramanathan told me that once it was decided that authorship of the booklets would be shared it became obvious that "it will be difficult to have all the NGOs, if they come individually; and so it was decided 'let the NCC be only networks, because everyone is a member of some network or another'" (Interview transcript). The NCC became a "network of networks", as Lakshmanan put it (Notes from interview).

These decisions about how to manage participation seem to have played a role in enrolling participants in the campaign and in building a set of robust ties between them. The implications of this are twofold. First, it suggests that while Lakshmanan's drive and determination were important, decisions such as these were also crucial. Second, the dynamics described by Shivanandan suggest that these decisions also make it more difficult to acknowledge Lakshmanan's persuasive efforts. Why? Because these decisions indicate that what the participants want to create is a collective actor, and that those involved recognise that for that collective to appear, the individual must disappear. That this is the case is most apparent in the story of the JSS booklets: to create a new collective, individual actors (individuals, their organisations and their networks) must delegate their power to a representative, in this case the National Coordination Committee. In this act of delegation several things are achieved. The NCC is "invested with a power which transcends" each of those individual actors (Bourdieu 1991: 203). As such, the NCC becomes a moral person, a spokesperson who speaks for the collective – but more than that, it is through this delegation that the NCC creates the collective (see the Introduction of my thesis for an account of Bourdieu's argument that the relationship between a group and its spokesperson is circular). What this requires is that the spokesperson no longer speaks for himself as an individual but instead only speaks for the collective; "the delegate must, as it were, abolish himself in the group, make a gift of his person to the group, declare and proclaim: 'I exist only through the group'" (1991: 209). Through this process it becomes more difficult for Lakshmanan, as part of the NCC, to say 'I did this', because the creation of the collective requires that he says instead 'we did this'.

This tension between the individual and the collective exists everywhere, but it is not of equal importance everywhere. In the field of social action in India, one can think of organisations and social movements where the collective is usually referred to in relation to its leading spokesperson(s) – perhaps most notably, the independence movement is inseparable from Gandhi, the JP Movement is inseparable from JP, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) is inseparable from its spokesperson Mehda Patkar – but one can also think of cases where particular individual activists are not as well-known as their collective – for example, the Chipko Movement. If we look beyond the field of social action, Bruno Latour's study of the nineteenth-century French scientist Louis Pasteur (Latour 1988) provides a useful point of comparison. Latour argues that while on the one hand Pasteur sought to enrol as many allies as possible in his struggles against disease, on the other hand "he denied that he had allies and pretended (with the active support of the hygienists and many other groups…) that everything he

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did proceeded from 'Science'" (1988: 71). The combination of these two moves, Latour argues, achieved two results: the deification of Pasteur as a man who "did everything, by his own power, or at least through the power of his ideas" (Latour 1988: 14), and the rendering of Pasteur's pronouncements indisputable because they came not from a man but from Science. In a similar way, many would agree that the independence movement benefited from the spotlight on an individual, Gandhi, and that Gandhi drew this spotlight because he spoke not for himself but for 'the People' (Bourdieu 1991: 212).

In contrast, the Indian health activist campaign in the year 2000 did not rely on or benefit from a focus on individual spokespersons, seeking instead to emphasise the collective – as a conscious strategy for keeping participating actors involved. In this context, Lakshmanan's individual contribution disappears from view in the 'public transcript' (Scott 1990) of the campaign, its significance downplayed even by those who acknowledge its existence, with one science movement activist explaining to me that "it was Lakshmanan because he had the time at that time and he went hammer-and-tongs and other people got involved, so if you're really looking at the *trivial* history, then that would be the trivial history about that. But the larger history is [more] relevant" (Interview transcript). Nevertheless, even as this logic pulls the public transcript of the campaign in one direction, the 'trivial' question of Lakshmanan's individual contribution – just like the question of the AIPSN's role in coordinating the campaign – assumes a new relevance in the context of a struggle between AIPSN and non-AIPSN factions within JSA at the time of my fieldwork.

2. Kolkata

How can we understand who was brought together by the campaign? My informants invoked various typologies to explain the differences between the groups assembled by the campaign, and all of these typologies are useful for answering this question in a way that captures the complexity of JSA.

In the previous section we saw how the NCC became a 'network of networks'. My informants agreed that this phrase referred to 18 national networks that came together in the campaign, and that there were major differences between these networks. A useful difference to begin with is the focus of their work. Ramanathan divided them into three categories: those focused on health issues, those focused on women's issues, and those with a different focus (see figure 1), and argued that a major achievement of the campaign was to bring these three categories together.

Fig. 1[39]

Health Networks	Women's Networks	Other Networks
AIDAN	AIDWA	ACHAN
CHAI	JWP	AIPSN
CMAI	NAWO	BGVS
FMRAI	NFIW	FORCES
MFC		NAPM
SOCHARA		RKM

[39] However, they do not necessarily agree on precisely which networks make up the initial 18. In figure 1 19 networks are listed. For example, a Policy Brief by the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) leaves off SOCHARA (CEHAT undated: 11), Narayan (c. 2008: slide 5) leaves off Ramakrishna Mission.

VHAI		AID-India
		BFPNI

These networks differ significantly in their structures, capacities, and the nature of their members' involvement in both the campaign in 2000 and later in JSA. With many of the networks, the involvement of their members in the campaign or JSA in a particular state depends on the other demands on the time of those members, the focus of their everyday work, and the personal and political dynamics between individuals (see chapter 5). For example, the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) has two offices, in Delhi and Bangalore, and a wide range of individual and institutional members spread across India. In recent years, the CMAI office in Delhi has played an important role in JSA by taking responsibility for housing the secretariat of the JSA's People's Rural Health Watch (see chapter 6). In many other parts of India, CMAI members are involved in JSA to the extent that they participate in meetings and events, but do not take on responsibilities in this way.

A number of participants came into the campaign as individuals and organisations, before the decision to conceptualise the collective as a network of networks. When this decision was made, these participants were no longer mentioned by name but assumed to fit under the membership of one or other network. Many were members of the Medico Friends Circle (MFC). Ramanathan emphasised the significance of MFC, suggesting that in the National Health Assembly at the end of the campaign (see below) "there were about 35 or 40 of us from MFC [who] knew each other as MFC before we became JSA" (Interview transcript). All of the participants would of course be able to introduce themselves in terms of any number of identities – for example, many members of BGVS would also be members of AIPSN, have a professional identity as a teacher or doctor and, as such, be a member of a trade union, another organisation, or various committees – and many were members of more than one of the national networks participating in the campaign, but for reasons explained in the previous section, the campaign made each participant prioritise one identity, their membership of one of the networks.

However, an important exception to this logic was that in the various places where the 18 national networks were listed (NCC 2000a-e; CEHAT undated; Narayan c. 2008), three non-networks were also mentioned, listed as 'institutions' or 'national resource groups': CHC, CEHAT and the Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health (CSMCH) at JNU. Ramanathan told me that in the discussions around which national network could coordinate the campaign, an attempt was made to define CHC as a national network so that it could be nominated for this task. CHC has an office and full time staff members and as such is the functional unit of the Society for Community Health, Awareness and Research Action (SOCHARA), a registered body with more or less loosely-affiliated members in several states. It is for this reason that some of the lists include SOCHARA in the list of 18 national networks, in recognition of their contribution to bringing together the network of networks (see chapter 2). The decision to mention three non-networks reflects the specific role attributed to them in the campaign, and the contrast made between this role and that of the networks: a distinction made between labour of action and mobilisation on the one hand, and intellectual labour of research and framing the agenda on the other. This dichotomy between national networks and national resource groups attempts to draw a sharp boundary between different types of actors and their contributions, one that does not necessarily reflect the reality very well but is politically expedient (see chapter 5).

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A participant in the campaign from CSMCH offered an alternative typology to this dichotomy, suggesting that the campaign and JSA have brought together four main groups – MFC, the science movement, NGOs and women-and-health activists – and that there has been "quite a lot of healthy cross-fertilisation" as a result, in a context in which these groups have tended to maintain a certain distance from each other; "for instance MFC was strangely immune, shall I say, to feminist concerns or in fact interaction with the women's movement" (Interview transcript). Referring to the science movement, this participant suggested that "I think since they have got involved with JSA, they have grown analytically" (transcript), arguing that the science movement's approach to health has changed from "we enlightened people have to take health to the people" towards seeing health as "part of a struggle for a better world" (Interview transcript). This typology, like Ramanathan's, enables a narrative of the campaign as bringing disparate groups together; unlike Ramanathan's typology, this one does not try to make the actors involved compatible with the concept of a network of networks. The previous section of this chapter argued that this concept was politically useful; however, if we remain wedded to it our scope for understanding the campaign and JSA is limited.

While all these typologies add to our understanding of the campaign and of JSA, one typology above all others dominated in the narratives of many of my informants and, for this reason, dominates my analysis in this thesis. This typology identifies three groups: *sanghatnas/jan sangathans* (Marathi/Hindi: people's organisations, people's movements), rights-based NGOs, and the left political parties the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and their front organisations. The perceived differences between these groups are examined in later chapters of the thesis; here it suffices to focus on how actors explained the significance of these groups coming together in JSA. One of my informants, working for a rights-based NGO, explained to me that each of these groups has strengths and weaknesses and for this reason they should ideally work together. As he put it, the *jan sangathans* have people but not politics, in the sense that they have a stronger mass base than the parties or the NGOs, but they tend to focus on issues. The political parties have politics not people – they have less of a mass popular base than the *jan sangathans* but they have a broad programme which will include health as part of the agenda.[40] The NGOs have a small, dedicated team who can do research that is beyond the capacity of parties or the *jan sangathans* (Fieldnotes). Figure 2 shows how this typology maps onto the networks and non-networks involved in the campaign in 2000, listing only those organisations and networks that are part of the NCC and that most of my informants think of as clearly fitting into one of these categories.

Fig. 2

Jan Sangathans	Rights-based NGOs	Left party front orgs
NAPM	CEHAT	AIDWA
	CHC	AIPSN
	MFC	BGVS
		FMRAI
		NFIW

[40] This is obviously an interpretation the left political parties and their front organisations would contest: see chapter 5 for a discussion.

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Viewing the campaign and the JSA in the terms of this typology, the achievement of both is bringing together two groups who have historically often been highly antagonistic towards each other and reluctant to work together, for ideological and political reasons explored elsewhere in this thesis: the supporters of CPM and CPI on the one hand, and their detractors on the other. These two groups map onto the AIPSN versus non-AIPSN factionalism within JSA. In the previous section of this chapter the influence of this political sectarianism on narratives of the campaign was analysed in terms of the AIPSN/non-AIPSN distinction; here it is productive to expand this analysis by examining narratives of the national health assembly in Kolkata.

Early in discussions of the Indian campaign a decision was made that it should have a national-level assembly as its endpoint. It had been agreed that the international People's Health Assembly would take place in Bangladesh in December, on the campus of Zafrullah Chowdhury's Gonoshasthaya Kendra (People's Health Centre) in Savar, near Dhaka. Zafrullah expected 1500 to attend, and on the basis that one-sixth of the world's population lives in India, invited the Indian activists to bring up to 250 people. The Indian activists realised they could bring together a much larger number than 250, and decided to make the focus of their campaign a national health assembly that would take place immediately before the international assembly, with the idea that 250 participants from the national health assembly would go on to the Dhaka assembly afterwards.

My informants agreed among themselves that this was how the decision to hold a national assembly had been made, but they disagreed strongly as to why the national assembly took place in Kolkata, capital of the communist state of West Bengal. Several of my informants argued that the only reason Kolkata was chosen was geographic: "because there's no other way to go to Dhaka except through Kolkata" (Interview transcript). However, many acknowledged that there was a lot of disagreement among the organisers over whether it was appropriate to hold it in Kolkata. Against this, some of my AIPSN/BGVS informants suggested there had not been much disagreement on this, argued that "where else in India would we find a state government willing to support such an Assembly?" (Notes from interview), and pointed out that the organisational strength of AIPSN/BGVS in West Bengal – across India AIPSN/BGVS has 600 000 members, 200 000 of whom are in West Bengal – made it possible to raise money locally given that "at that point of time we [the NCC] had no funding, no money, and we didn't know where to get money from, there was no commitment, the [JSA] network was just getting formed" (Interview transcript). While such AIPSN/BGVS narratives provide a strong justification for holding the assembly in Kolkata, they need to be understood in relation to the narratives of some members of the non-AIPSN faction. One NAPM activist who participated in the campaign told me that while one reason the national assembly happened in Kolkata was that the international assembly was in Dhaka, the other reason "was that JSA was dominated by BGVS and Kolkata had [a state government led by CPM]" (Interview transcript).

It is worth dwelling further on this participant's narrative of what actually took place at Kolkata.

> The West Bengal people did not allow the people's movement people to get involved at all. There was a very bad flood [in West Bengal] during that time,[41] the people's movements were involved in [relief work], and the [West Bengal] government was not getting any help to the flood victims. And the whole [assembly] event was managed by the government people, and the people who were invited for the assembly were school children and their own representatives. The people's

[41] Give some brief details of the flood here.

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> movements of Kolkata boycotted it, and even though Mehda [Patkar] and I had come, we were there on the first day, and our people came to collect us and we had to leave, we had a meeting with them. People's organisations boycotted it because the government doesn't want it to be exposed that they didn't do anything [about the flood] and so stopped them [participating]. (Interview transcript)

This narrative is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it appears to rely on an ambiguity – surely *either* the people's organisations boycotted the assembly *or* the government stopped them participating. Second, the reader may be inclined to think of the narrative rather differently if it is read alongside the counter-narrative which I heard from one AIPSN/BGVS activist, that in spite of efforts to involve them fully, NAPM made no effort to mobilise large numbers for the campaign but simply attended the assembly with a delegation of 6 (Interview transcript).

What I think we can learn from these narratives of Kolkata is not necessarily what happened – who is telling the truth – but something about the mechanisms by which different groups maintain distinctions between themselves and others in circumstances where they come together on a common platform. In particular, I would suggest that this NAPM narrative can be read as an expression "of a need to distance oneself from a patron and appear as someone who has entered a strategic relationship with eyes open", to use a felicitous phrase from an ethnographic account by Arild Engelsen Ruud (2001: 119-120). Ruud's paper explores the ways villagers in West Bengal manage their encounters with local politicians, arguing that the former understand that politics is about power – the capacity to get things done – rather than principles, and that because they are not "independent and self-sufficient enough to be able to live wholly apart from the more powerful" they cannot avoid becoming entangled in politics even though this sits uneasily with their "moral standards and self-images" (2001: 130). To save face and avoid being 'dirtied' by their involvement in patron-client relations, villagers find ways to maintain their distance from politics even as they engage in it, for example by gossiping irreverently about a patron behind their back or attending a village meeting as a loyal client but chatting, joking and laughing while seated in the audience. I would suggest that the NAPM activist's narrative represents a similar resolution to a similar problem. NAPM attended the assembly because they believed it was politically expedient to do so, to be part of the collective assembled there despite the presence of the 'unprincipled' BGVS, CPM and the West Bengal government; to maintain their self-image as principled activists, NAPM contributed only a token presence to the assembly, left early, and indicated an awareness of precisely why the assembly warranted such limited involvement.

Thus, somewhat perversely, my interpretation suggests that not only do different actors with divergent interests offer different narratives because they are in competition with each other (as explained in the previous section of this chapter), but also because offering different narratives actually helps them to work together. The fact that NAPM activists can offer a different narrative of the assembly to that offered by AIPSN activists makes it possible for the former to overcome the contradiction between presenting themselves as above the unprincipled politicking of the latter while at the same time forming a collective with AIPSN. This resolution would become impossible if activists from NAPM and AIPSN were required to articulate a single, common narrative. In light of this argument it is interesting to note that while a report of the Kolkata assembly was drafted and circulated, it was never completed. Such a report would, presumably, have comprised a singular narrative of what took place – a narrative to which activists from NAPM or AIPSN, or both, would have objected.

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The various typologies of which actors were brought together by the campaign also indicate that the naming and exclusion of a common enemy also facilitate the coming together of groups who are reluctant to share a common platform. In fact the collective that came together in the campaign in 2000 identified at least two common enemies: the forces of communalism and globalisation.

One of my informants explained that while AIPSN/BGVS represents the science movement of the secular left, the Patriotic and People-oriented Science and Technology (PPST)[42] Foundation is the science movement of the right-wing, and that "there is even a BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party (Hindi: Indian People's Party)] MFC" (Interview transcript). Thus in spite of the polarisation between the party and non-party left and between the left and the Gandhians, the existence of Hindu right-wing organisations as a common threat makes it easier for these groups to come together. Potentially divisive ideological differences are tolerated because the greater concern is to detect and deal with the presence of the Hindu right-wing; as one informant explained, secular activists "are a little sensitive because to some extent in all our organisations [it is] people's positions in meetings [that] help us decide 'do you think they have a Hindutva element or not?'" (Interview transcript).[43]

Perhaps a good example of how this works within the JSA is the Ramakrishna Mission (RKM), an organisation listed as one of the 18 networks of the campaign in 2000 that several of my informants claim has had no further involvement in JSA since then. RKM is an organisation founded by Vivekananda at the end of the nineteenth-century based on Vedantic Hindu ideas. The organisation is engaged in social work across India, much of its activities based on the efforts of monks and householder disciples (ref), under the motto *Atmano mokshartham jagad hitaya cha* (Sanskrit: For self-realisation and the liberation of the world). One of my informants had volunteered with RKM as a young man but was no longer active with the organisation when he became involved in organising the campaign in 2000. He told me that "the RKM motto is 'self-realisation *through* social action', and some people translate it as 'self-realisation and social action'. Vivekananda gave it as 'social action is the *only* way to self-liberation' [but] there has been a big debate that he didn't mean 'only'" (Interview transcript). This ambiguity, he claimed, is reflected in variations in RKM's practices in different parts of the country, and contributes to secular activists' suspicions about the relation between RKM's religious and social work aspects, although "wherever Ramakrishna Mission is deeply involved in social action, you'll find the NGO network will include them in a radical formation, or would not be uncomfortable [about associating with them]" (Interview transcript). Some JSA activists display discomfort and distance themselves from RKM. One NCC member told me that "I don't know how a group like Ramakrishna Mission came to be there [in the Kolkata assembly]" (Interview transcript), and in the same breath explained that since 2000 the JSA has made efforts to involve dalit (low-caste) groups, in particular the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). I would suggest that these statements reflect the extent to which concerns about association with upper-caste Hindutva politics shape the field of social action in which JSA is located.

Apart from the obvious fact that a major focus of the campaign as a whole was the effects of globalisation on health, one story of the international People's Health Assembly in Dhaka illustrates not only the significance of globalisation for JSA activists, but the

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[42] http://www.ciks.org/sisorgs.htm

[43] Hindutva (Hindi: Hinduness) is a term used to describe a Hindu nationalist ideology associated with Hindu fundamentalist organisations and parties. See the History chapter for a discussion.

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difference between their view of it and how some non-Indian participants view it. Approximately 2500 Indians participated in the Kolkata assembly, and when it finished approximately 250 of these travelled to the PHA in Dhaka – by far the largest group from a single country. Despite ideological differences within this group, they came together as one when they heard that the World Bank had been invited to make a presentation at the PHA. One member of the Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives' Associations of India (FMRAI) explained:

> Usually we have seen in our country church organisations keeping away from movements, to keep away the controversies. But in health area they're very much involved. And I found to my surprise when I started working with them at JSA-level that they are more militant [...] than us! See the World Bank people, when they came to address the PHA, prior to that in the evening, me and Suresh [of the Delhi Science Forum] were conducting a meeting of all the delegates, and the mostly church organisation people, our nurses and sisters, were very strong, they said 'Can you give us any example where the World Bank has been successful with their model?' I said, 'What should we do?' They said, 'Allow us to push them out!' I got really surprised that they're more militant than us! That was a good part of it. And somehow in all meetings they come to me because they think well, there is some other people who are eager to shout energetically, so they always take my suggestions.
>
> *Brendan: Who was it within the group from India within the Dhaka Assembly who were saying there shouldn't be a presentation by the World Bank at all?*
>
> Almost everybody, in fact everybody. The debate was what should be the process of throwing them out, everybody agreed that we should not allow them, but we had to debate on the process a bit. (Interview transcript)

3. Other Actors

Latour's *Aramis* attempts to do what I have attempted in this chapter, to offer the multiplicity of narratives without favouring one; but to do this he moves beyond the narratives of the human actors to present the voices of the non-human actors who cannot speak for themselves. By adapting Latour's move in the analysis of the campaign in 2000, this section develops two arguments. First, it shows that these non-human actors played vital roles in making the collective 'real'. Second, it shows that the narratives of activists in fact, exclude many from the collective even as they attribute agency to collectives rather than individuals (see the argument on authorship in section one), and that this is an important element of what being an activist necessarily involves.

Like many within the field of science and technology studies, Latour has drawn on pioneering work by Shapin and Schaffer (1985) to argue that the European Enlightenment introduced a sharp division into how we see the world: the division between culture and nature, with "politics on one side and science or technoscience on the other" (Latour 1988: 5, see also Latour 1991, 1993). This split involves positing that certain processes only include human actors (the terrain of the social sciences) and other processes only include non-human actors (the terrain of the natural sciences). In fact, Latour argues, all processes involve both and must be explained as such. This does not mean that science reduces to power; it does not, but it does offer "*other means*" (Latour 1988: 229, emphasis in original): "other allies, new resources, and fresh troops" (1988: 228). If, in accounting for Pasteur's achievements, we acknowledge only the human actors, then what he achieved looks 'miraculous'; according to Latour, this is simply because the accounting remains incomplete, because we have failed to acknowledge the non-human actors Pasteur 'recruited' and their contribution to what he is credited with.

Several non-human actors were crucial to the campaign in 2000. Shivanandan told me that at that time, many of the organisations involved were not on email, instead communicating "by phone or writing letters" (Notes from interview). Since the campaign involved large number of people, Shivanandan suggested a national coordination email group, which turned out to be a great success: "it got the national group to directly communicate with each other efficiently, cutting costs, and ensuring coordination, structure" (Shivanandan, notes from interview). The five booklets and the Charter, produced as collective artefacts of the campaign, were emphasised by most of my informants. Shivanandan played a major role in the preparation of the former; as he put it, "by August we sent out the booklets, and I think [some] people had earlier agreed to be involved but had not been active, and were now coming to see that it was quite big, and lots of health groups who were not previously involved in a big way got more involved" (Notes from interview). This should not surprise us; as Annelise Riles has noted, "[c]ollaboration is both a means and an end of *most* projects of document production" (2006: 27, my emphasis). Finally it is worth mentioning the 'People's Health Trains'. Lakshmanan explained: "we had the idea of block-booking trains to Kolkata. Tickets come out 3 months before the day, so we organised a mass booking of tickets so everyone would be on the same trains rather than coming in piecemeal. Five trains from different parts of the country" (Notes from interview).

How can we think of these non-humans as actors? Latour points out that, just like humans, the participation of non-humans in a project must be solicited: they must be persuaded to participate, insofar as their participation comes with conditions – "they *allow* or *forbid* other alliances. They require; they constrain; they provide" (1996: 57, emphasis in original; see also Riles 2006: 21). The advent of email and what is today still known as the PHA-NCC e-group have had a major impact on how information is shared, ideas discussed and actions planned within the JSA community. They open up new possibilities, just as they close down others. The aesthetics and content of the booklets and the Charter were subjects of intense negotiation because, as the most visible artefacts of the campaign, they did and do have a major influence on how other actors see the campaign – something that Chalapathi recognised from the outset – and how these objects can be used in future. As Shivanandan explained, "we got very academic material sent to us [and] I kept trying to make it into cartoon books because this meant [it would be] in a form that our field people would be able to understand, because our field people don't all have high education" (Notes from interview). But more than this, these non-humans help hold the human actors together, adding "little solidities, little durabilities, little resistances" that "make it more difficult for those who have committed themselves to it to change their minds, to hold onto their money, or to back out of the project if the going gets rough" (Latour 1996: 45-6). While the People's Health Trains can be seen as a purely practical measure or perhaps an attempt to encourage solidarity among the assembly's participants, it is also very strategic: courtesy of the Indian railway booking system, three months before the assembly the number of participants from different parts of India could be estimated to a high degree of accuracy and all could agree that this was going to happen, and was going to be big.

Latour's framework encourages us to think of activists as brokers playing a key role in bringing together disparate interests, but more than that he insists that in identifying the interests brought together we do not stop at the point where we have listed all the actors identified by the narratives of the activists themselves. Instead, he prompts us to examine the actors that are invisible or marginal in the activists' account, those to whom the activists do not attribute agency but who nevertheless make significant contributions to

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the process by which a project such as the campaign in 2000 makes the transition from an idea on paper to a reality of a set of health campaign resource booklets and a Charter, a variety of local programmes and actions, and 2500 people gathered in a hall in Kolkata. Does it really make sense to think of the campaign as 18 national networks coming together? No; rather, the collective that came together was a diverse group of human actors linked together by a complex web of cross-cutting affiliations and loyalties, whose continuing interest and support of the project was partly facilitated by the contributions of several non-human actors. However, this does not mean the idea of a 'network of networks' is irrelevant to the story, it simply means that the location of this idea in the story needs to be understood for what it is: not as an adequate account of what happened, but as an idea that is itself one of the non-human actors that helped to hold the collective together despite internal differences, political rivalries and factionalism.

The broader point which Latour's idea of 'non-human actors' serves to highlight is his concern that a social scientist must take the actors 'into account' by *not* deciding, in advance, what entities are to be regarded as actors and what are not – precisely because the actors themselves make these decisions. In this chapter I have attempted to respond to this concern by drawing on the approach Latour adopts in *Aramis*, placing the narratives of the actors beside each other in order to show the diverse ways in which the actors make these decisions and the significance of this.

Does such an approach mean that in fact the social scientist is doing nothing other than repeating, *verbatim*, what the actors themselves have said? No, for at least two reasons. First, although this chapter includes many quotes, these quotes cannot be seen as transparently presenting 'people's voices'; rather, they must be seen as products of specific encounters between me and each informant, encounters shaped both by my presence and by how each informant is positioned in relation to processes at work in the field of social action. Second, the chapter does not follow Rashomon in simply presenting narratives without judging which is true. Each quote is no more than a tiny edited segment of a much longer statement, and as such the selection of each involves interpretation on my part and judgments about how the meaning of spoken words can best be translated into the form and style of written text. In addition, the narratives are presented alongside my own commentary, which offers an argument for how they should be read. Thus in fact I have not provided an account that does not prioritise one narrative over others; I have provided an account that prioritises my interpretation of the campaign, using the narratives to build an argument about how the campaign came together and what it amounted to. I have argued that a useful way of looking at the campaign is as a project which successfully enrolled a wide range of actors with divergent interests, bringing them together into a collective that continues to be seen as significant enough to merit the construction of narratives that enable the actors involved to acknowledge and justify their involvement, despite the presence within that collective of actors with whom they are reluctant to express enthusiasm about associating with.

Latour's approach, like any other, is not without its limitations and weaknesses. First, placing the narratives of actors side-by-side may ensure that the social scientist's account includes more actors than any individual actor's account, but it does not ensure that *all* relevant actors are mentioned. Two notable exclusions were the intellectual figureheads of the campaign: Dr Antia of the Foundation for Research in Community Health and Dr Banerji of Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health (CSMCH) – all of my informants simply omitted to mention them, although Lakshmanan did refer to the process of "getting the intellectuals on board" (Notes from interview) in the early months

of 2000. It is not hard to see why they were not mentioned: the contribution of both was largely in terms of adding their name to give legitimacy to a project they were not particularly involved in, and neither has been actively involved in JSA since 2000 (the following chapter will have more to say on the relation of intellectuals to the activists of JSA). Nevertheless, as chapter 2 showed, both these individuals has played a major role in shaping the economy of stances in the JSA community, in terms of their writings on health and in terms of the paths they followed as individuals.[44] What we do not get from Latour's approach is a sense of this economy of stances as a system or structure. With this in mind the following chapter develops an account of this economy of stances as a system by examining in more detail how my informants' conceptualise it as such in terms of a set of positions that they compare with each other in terms of systems of moral ranking.

Second, by focusing on specific actors and the relations between them, Latour's approach is of limited use for understanding things that cannot easily be understood in this way. Several of my informants told me that it was a feeling of solidarity that led to the collective decision to build an Indian movement for 'health for all' spontaneously made at the end of the Kolkata assembly, that a similar decision was made at the end of the international assembly a few days later, and that these decisions created the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (JSA) (Hindi: People's Health Movement) and People's Health Movement (PHM) respectively (Interview transcript). Perhaps Latour would argue that it doesn't take a social scientist to make the obvious comment that this looks like a fairly standard myth of origins which can be deconstructed in exactly the way described by Foucault in the first section of this chapter, by pointing, as one of my informants did, to a whole set of meetings that took place after the assembly before the JSA emerged as an actor based on particular organising principles (Interview transcript). Yet such a deconstruction does not negate the likelihood that alongside self-interest, the 'feeling of solidarity' remains an important additional explanation for these decisions which a social scientist should take into account. 'Solidarity' is a concept with a particular meaning in the moral universe of my informants, and my point here is that Latour does not offer us the tools to understand the ways actors negotiate the complexities and contradictions of that universe. The following chapter seeks to find ways to do so.

[44] What is more, the JSA brochure lists Antia as Chairperson and Banerji as Vice-Chairperson of JSA (JSA undated: 9).

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4. Voluntarism: The Pure Gift and Dirty Money

Introduction

> Many of us have come to this with an understanding that ground-level activism has a higher place than policy work or intellectual activism. (Interview transcript)

While the previous chapter explored how my informants seek to define themselves and each other in terms of roles played in the campaign in 2000, this chapter examines how they do so in terms of a moral ranking of actors and actions. The chapter is built around the concept of voluntarism, which I take to be central to JSA, and draws on the anthropological study of gift exchange (Mauss 1990, other refs). Voluntarism can be understood as a particular type of gift, and is defined here as providing a service to others without the expectation of receiving some benefit, monetary or otherwise, in return for those services. However, this 'definition' should be treated by the reader as no more than a first cut at analysis, and a problematic one at that, for at least two reasons. First, because as Adrian Mayer has argued in a study of the concept of *seva* (Hindi: public service) in central India (1981), such a definition may have the status of an ideal of which it is impossible to find concrete examples, as even recognition of the service by others might be understood as a form of benefit to the giver – in which case, true *seva* is by definition completely hidden to all but the giver. Second, because within the field of social action in which JSA operates, the concept of voluntarism is infused with an idea of radicalism.

All of the members of JSA with whom I spoke understood voluntarism to be one of its defining characteristics. Here I quote from an evaluation of the first five years of JSA prepared by 3 young interns from UNICEF, who visited India in 2005 and conducted interviews with many of the key players in JSA. The interns wrote:

> Funding is [now] being sought for the national secretariat, but by and large the [JSA] movement is voluntary…One fundamental issue is that if funding is provided, then would it still remain a movement? "You can't have a global movement in an organisation, because it then no longer remains a movement" (Thelma Narayan [of CHC Bangalore]). It would be very difficult to institutionalise the movement, because *the roots of the campaign have to remain with the people*. One solution is that the movement has specific people employed for the work of the campaign, though once again the issues of financing and whether or not the movement will remain a movement becomes apparent. (Inukonda *et al.* 2005: 24-29, my emphasis)

The key to this quote is the normative claim that the roots of JSA must remain with 'the people', and the claim that there is a risk that the people will be disenfranchised if JSA is institutionalised and receives funding. Between them, these two claims provide a justification for why JSA should remain voluntary. This chapter is concerned with how we arrive at these claims in the first place, and with where these claims lead to in the practices of my informants.

To begin with, who are 'the people'? My informants would tend to answer this question in one of two ways. Some would say that 'the people' with whom they are concerned are the poor and that most JSA activists are not poor. Lakshmanan, for example, told me that "by socio-economic status they're middle-class and their heart is pro-poor and we welcome that", but that most JSA activists, including himself, do not face the specific conditions with which JSA is concerned: "people's health is not my health. I've got other access to healthcare" (Interview transcript). Less sanguinely, a junior member of staff in a rights-based NGO told me "There are no people in the people's health movement"

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(Fieldnotes), meaning that the movement is a movement 'for' rather than 'of' the poor, a distinction of which much is made in the field of social action.

Against this distinction, however, others in JSA would argue that, as one put it, "are we not also the people?" (Fieldnotes). This points to an alternative view of the people that can be understood with reference to the concept of solidarity. Morales (1998) writes that solidarity is not altruism, but comes from "the inability to tolerate the affront to our own integrity of passive or active collaboration in the oppression of others, and from...the recognition that, like it or not, our liberation is bound up with that of every other being on the planet" (1998: 125). Galeano (2000) writes that solidarity "is horizontal and takes place between equals", while charity "is top-down, humiliating those who receive it and never challenging the implicit power relations" (2000: 312). With these ideas in mind, we can rewrite the claims stated earlier in terms of a concern that institutionalisation and funding make it harder to bridge the gap and challenge the power relations between middle-class activists and the poor.

It is largely on this basis that, to date, the JSA has not received direct funding for any of its activities. Indeed it would be difficult for it to do so, since it is not registered with the Government of India as a society or trust – which, in contemporary India, is a precondition for most funding (ref?). Instead, its activities are funded by, and sometimes through, member organisations. As such, these activities come to be associated not only with JSA but also with the member organisations involved, especially with those closest to the source of funding. This sometimes leads to confusion about which activities are JSA activities and which are not. For example, JSA conducted a Right to Healthcare campaign in 2004 and 2005, with the support and some funding from the National Human Rights Commission. In Maharashtra, this campaign was often understood to be a project of the NGO SATHI (Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives) because funding for the campaign in the state was routed through SATHI. Similarly, the first phase of the Government of India's Community-based Monitoring of Health Services programme (which ran from 2007 to 2009) was often understood to be a project of JSA because a large proportion of the civil society organisations involved in both developing and implementing the programme were JSA member organisations.[45]

Unlike the 'ideal type' definition of voluntarism presented above, activities such as these are not hidden. For this reason, lack of clarity about which activities have which 'authors' (see the discussion of authorship in the previous chapter) leads not only to confusion but also feeds into factionalism within civil society networks and coalitions, providing activists with opportunities to accuse each other of, for example, 'co-option' by the government or of extracting disproportionate benefits for themselves or their organisation from activities carried out on a voluntary basis by a broader network of actors. Such accusations are premised on a distinction between actions performed for the good of 'the people' and self-interested actions, and rely on the impossibility of ever knowing with certainty the motives of the one who acts.

In recent years sociologists have begun to examine the place of "moral rhetorics" (Allahyari 2000) in charity and voluntary work (Allahyari 2000; Baugher 2007; Sharma 2006: 72). Allahyari defines 'moral selving' as the cognitive and emotive "work of creating oneself as a more virtuous, and often more spiritual, person" (2000: 4-6) and

[45] Many government officials referred to the Community-based Monitoring of Health Services as an 'NGO project', despite the fact that in all government publications it is referred to as a programme of the Government of India under the National Rural Health Mission (refs).

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later studies have taken the analysis of this concept further by examining the way in which it "implicitly constructs its negation": that is, "the high moral status of charity workers is necessarily premised upon the low moral status of others in the organisation or some implied other in society at large" (Baugher 2007: 2; see also Arvidson 2007). It is these mutually constitutive processes of 'moral selving' and 'moral othering' that are, I will argue, productive in the making and breaking of collectives in Indian civil society.

Activists draw upon moral rhetorics to differentiate between themselves, between their organisations and their coalitions by ranking different types of practices in terms of their moral value, and ranking different actors on the basis of the practices in which they are perceived to be involved. In this chapter I describe activist systems of moral ranking as 'hierarchies of virtue' (c.f. Gellner 2010b: 4). Inevitably, activists do not agree on a common hierarchy of virtue, but disagree among themselves on the relative value of different activities and actors. For example, the previous chapter argued that while some JSA activists place more value on activism linked with the mainstream left political parties, others place more value on activism that is not linked to these parties. The History chapter showed some of the historical processes since Independence that contributed to the emergence of these two distinct hierarchies of virtue. Hierarchies of virtue are historically contingent rather than static; particular hierarchies, and the categories they construct, stabilise or destabilise, become dominant or almost invisible, and with these shifts the list of actors within a particular bounded category alters. In some situations particular actors exert control over where boundaries are constructed and whether they are well-defined or blurred and ambiguous, and manipulate these according to the needs of the moment; in other situations they have less control and are to some extent at the mercy of categories they themselves may have helped to create. Sometimes this variable flexibility is a source of considerable confusion and tension within collectives, while at other times it plays an important role in keeping them together.

In developing this argument the chapter draws upon and expands the typology of actors emphasised in the previous chapter: the tripartite division of activist organisations into *sanghatnas/jan sangathans* (Marathi/Hindi: people's organisations, people's movements), rights-based NGOs, and the left political parties the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and their front organisations. My focus in this chapter is on a particular hierarchy of virtue which I take to be a dominant framework for understanding the field of social action among many members of the non-AIPSN faction of JSA, in particular among those working in rights-based NGOs. I examine how this hierarchy works, the hierarchies to which it is a response, and its effects, on the basis that such a discussion is crucial preparation for the analysis of JSA in the following chapters.

The first section of the chapter presents a hierarchy of virtue which I attribute to many of the senior staff of rights-based NGOs. The second section argues that while this moral hierarchy makes a sharp distinction between the work of people's organisations and that of NGOs, it also presents a way for NGO professionals to overcome this distinction through voluntarism, in particular through voluntarism that 'piggybacks' on their paid work, which I call parasitic voluntarism. The third section explores some of the dynamics of practices of parasitic voluntarism in order to capture a sense of the power relations involved.

1. A Hierarchy of Gifts

Let us begin with a sketch of those who articulate the hierarchy of virtue this chapter explores, by means of a brief tour of the office of a rights-based NGO. The data on which the arguments of this chapter and those that follow are based derives from fieldwork with a number of organisations; however, it will be apparent to the reader that SATHI is the dominant point of reference. SATHI operates out of an office in Kothrud, a suburb a short bus ride from the centre of the city of Pune. The office occupies the fourth floor of an apartment building built for residential use, with the result that the office is shaped like a doughnut with a light well as its centre and a single corridor linking all the rooms (see figure 1). Entering the office takes you into a room occupied by administrative staff; next to this room is a kitchen, next to the kitchen is a library, next to that is a large meeting room. On the far side of the office are three rooms occupied by office staff, the coordinators of the organisation (Dr Ameya and Dr Sudhir), and the fieldworkers of the organisation respectively.[46] The office staff and the fieldworkers are what I would term the 'rank-and-file' of the organisation; the difference between them is that the office staff work from 10am to 6pm in the office while the fieldworkers are frequently absent from the office for days at a time on visits to 'the field' – a term commonly used to refer to the rural areas outside the city where SATHI's partner organisations are based, some of which are 12 hours away by bus or train. Among the office staff and fieldworkers there is variation in seniority and responsibility. Those who articulate the hierarchy of virtue this chapter explores are the senior staff in both these categories and the coordinators of the organisation; I refer to these individuals as NGO professionals. We will hear more about the views of the lower-ranking members of staff in the following chapter.

Fig. 1

[46] This spatial classification is not watertight; in particular, one woman who might be classified as an office worker sits in the fieldworker room on an everyday basis, and sometimes some of the office workers sit in this room when there is space for them to do so.

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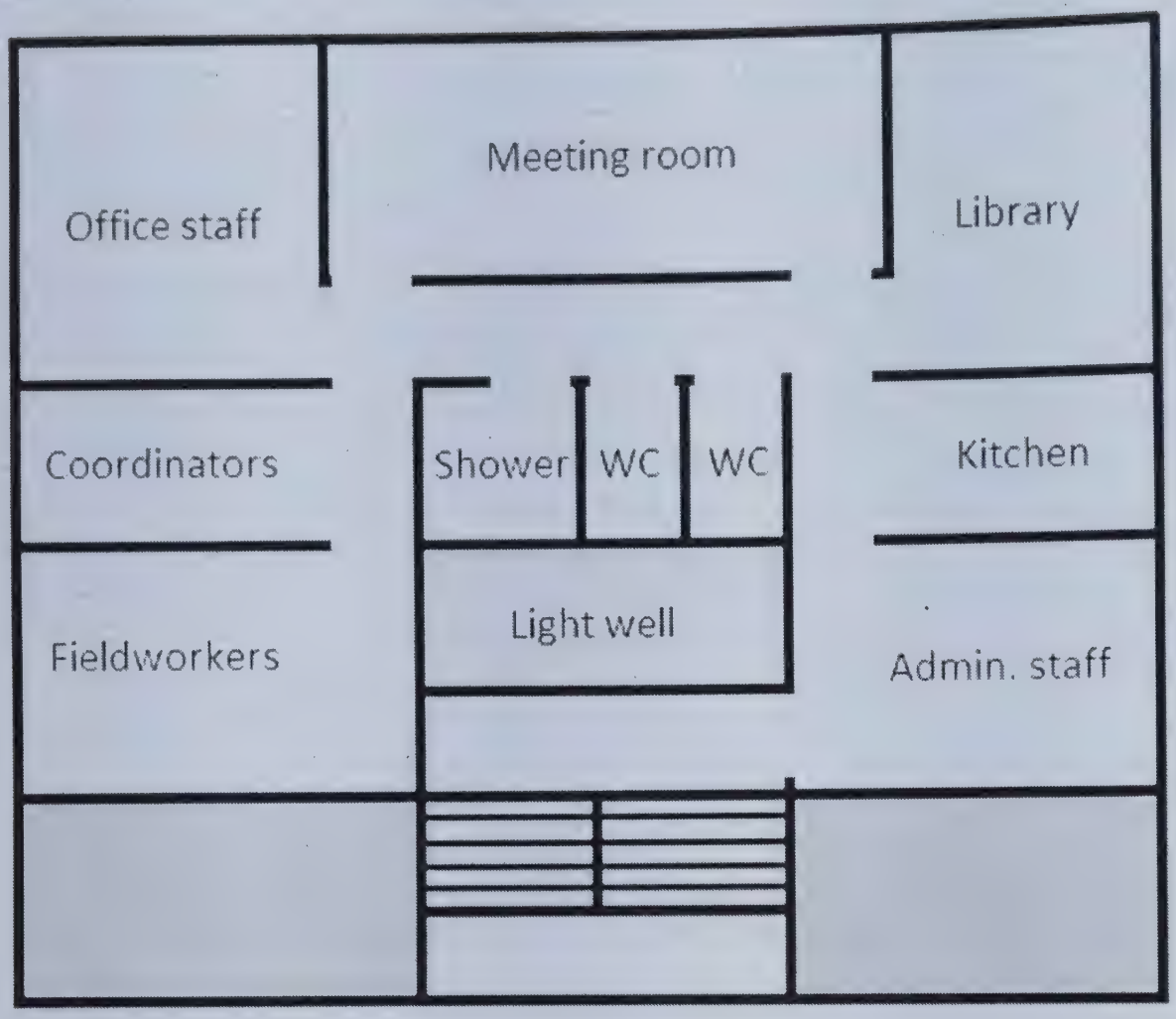

When it comes to situating oneself within the political field, the Lokayan narrative described in the History chapter is an important starting point for many NGO professionals. They see their own position in relation to a distinction between a corrupt politics of politicians, parties and their front organisations on the one hand, and a pure politics of activists and non-party political formations on the other. The latter is morally superior to the former. However, this simple dichotomy is complicated by the variety of possible subject positions within the contemporary field of social action, and it is to this variety that we must now turn.

For many NGO professionals, the highest moral value is placed on the work of the 'full-timer' activist of people's organisations. A full-timer is one who has given their whole being to the movement, with no expectation of any return to themselves: the ultimate renunciation, the ultimate sacrifice, in a society in which the renouncer is a key figure, understood by some to occupy the highest moral position because he is outside the caste system (Burghart 1978, 1983). The notion of self-sacrifice (*pyag* in Marathi) is central to the figure of the full-timer, so that stories about particular full-timers focus on their status as unmarried or divorced and without family,[47] the times they have continued with their work despite ill-health, and the long periods they have gone without food and sleep. The body of the full-timer (or of an individual who was a full-timer earlier in their life) is physically marked by the individual's sacrifice. One woman described to me the injuries her husband had incurred during police torture as a result of his activism; another

[47] Although this is not always the case. Often full-timers do have a family, and the question of the 'social reproduction of the activist' is a crucial aspect of how the figure of the full-timer is a gendered figure. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address this question, which will have to be the subject of future work.

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explained to me that the long-term digestive disorders of a particular individual were brought on by his activism. Given that the individual's intentions cannot be known, that which is visible – such as the individual's ill-health – becomes important indicators of their moral worth. Personal risk-taking is crucial to the identity of the full-timer. Especially of interest are fasts undertaken as a form of protest. Mehda Patkar's 'fasts until death' in the same vein as Gandhi's fasts stand out here. The full-timer's unwavering commitment to the cause is most fascinating when, like Mehda Patkar, they have committed not only the entirety of their life but also the possibility of their death. Jenkins (2010) suggests that the figure of the full-timer is partly "a hangover from the myth (as opposed to the more complex reality) of Gandhi's mode of political action – an unattainable ideal in which personal sacrifice gives rise to an organic flowering of mass collective action...what Morris-Jones called the 'saintly idiom' in Indian politics" (Jenkins 2010: 423; Morris-Jones 1963: 133-54).

Closely tied to this notion of self-sacrifice is the relationship between the full-timer and money, which is in turn closely tied to the concept of a people's organisation as understood by my informants. A people's organisation is a mass-membership organisation which works with a particular community (e.g. Dalits, *adivasis* [tribals] or domestic workers) and is largely financially supported by contributions from that community rather than funding from the state or donor agencies. Their relative autonomy from state and donor agendas means that the activities of such organisations are mainly driven by the priorities of the community for which they work and by a leftist, rights-based and/or radical perspective on how social change is achieved, rather than by the need to secure funding for short-term development projects, which funding agencies usually require to have rigid timeframes and target outputs; they are understood to be organisations 'of' rather than 'for' the people. As such, they are more inclined to use confrontational tactics in their interactions with state agencies than project-driven NGOs might be – partly because they are relatively under-resourced for other types of approach and partly because their mass membership base lends itself to such tactics backed-up by the credible threat of mass protest actions. The people's organisation's commitment to its members is seen as a direct function of the extent to which the organisation is financially accountable to those members and no one else. Similarly, the full-timer's commitment – financial commitment *in addition to* other types of commitment – is to the organisation's members by lieu of the fact that s/he relies on the contributions of those members for her/his bread-and-butter.

The most obvious permissible exception to the ideal that the people's organisation should be financially supported by contributions from its members alone is the contribution from a well-wisher, where that contribution comes without conditions and without expectation of return. Such a contribution approaches the ideal of "disinterested giving" identified by Mayer's informants (1981: 165-7). However, as Mayer notes, it seems likely that no real practice could ever completely live up to this ideal. Even the most disinterested gift-giver has finite resources to give and will only give to organisations that s/he trusts and that share the giver's perspective on how social change is achieved. This would be the case even if giving took place 'at arm's length'. For example, Arundhati Roy has established an organisation charged with the disbursement of royalties from her best-selling novel *The God of Small Things* (ref) to people's organisations doing 'good work' in India. Despite the absence of a direct link between Roy and the eventual recipients of her gift, the arrangement relies on a relationship of trust between Roy and the individuals in the mediating organisation, and relationships of trust between these individuals and the eventual recipients. There is always already a link between the action that is the gift and

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the action by the recipient that provoked or inspired the gift; they are not "two quite separate actions" (Mayer 1981: 167) because the giving is not anonymous.

In this way we can think of Roy's gift as imposing an obligation on the recipient to keep doing good work in order to keep the support (which is moral as well as financial). As Bailey (1970) puts it, "[t]he 'faithful' (those who follow out of a sense of righteousness) make their gift to the cause, and so impose upon the leader the obligation not merely to serve the cause, but also to shine forth as an exemplar of its ideals" (1970: 36-7). Full-timers are aware of this and cautious about how their personal expenditure is seen. The body language of one became defensive when I visited him at his home and saw he had purchased a music system since I was last there, as if he expected me to challenge the moral appropriateness of such luxury. Another justified the fact that he was taking a holiday by saying "It's for my daughter" – although I had not challenged his decision to take a holiday.

However, at this point in the argument, the comparison between the ideals of the full-timer, the people's organisation and the disinterested gift on the one hand with real practices on the other is less relevant than the figure set up as the moral opposite of these ideals: the NGO. That is, in a very significant sense these ideals would not need to exist if not for the existence of the NGO; the NGO *is* their *raison d'etre*, and we can say that the moral people's organisation and the immoral NGO are mutually constitutive ideas. The principal focus of this dichotomy has already been introduced above: while people's organisations are accountable to their members, NGOs are primarily accountable to the state and non-state donor agencies who financially support their existence and activities. This means that the activities of NGOs are less focused on the priorities of the community with whom they work because they must necessarily be closely tuned to the priorities of their funders – he who pays the piper calls the tune. NGOs are understood to be organisations 'for' rather than 'of' the poor, usually employing well-educated, middle-class professionals rather than individuals from the community with whom they work. In addition, the period of their commitment to a particular community is dictated not by the needs of that community but by their ability to secure additional funding when the initial funding runs out. It is assumed that funding agencies do not approximate the ideal of disinterested giving in any way, constrained as they are to demonstrate concrete and tangible outputs to those to whom they are accountable – the sources of the funding they distribute.

However, the comparative commitment of people's organisations and NGOs is not only measured in terms of the nature of the gift-giving involved, but also in terms of renunciation and sacrifice. NGO work is lampooned as '9-til-5 activism':[48] full commitment to organisational goals and objectives during office hours and a complete lack of such commitment outside office hours, when other commitments (in particular, family) must take priority. The charge is often made that NGO work cannot be regarded as activism, and Gellner (2010b) argues that this charge "has some traction", especially where "organisations are well established and do represent a career, and especially when there are evident links (through kinship, patron-client networks, and so on) with politics and making money" (2010b: 3).

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[48] Although in many cases, including that of SATHI, '10-6' might be more appropriate than '9-5', but still fails to capture the precise nature of the commitment of the fieldworker who travels to the field for days at a time.

It seems plausible to suggest that for those who subscribe to it, the people's organisation full-timer/NGO professional moral dichotomy is productive in a number of ways. Perhaps most obviously, this moral dichotomy is a useful rhetorical device in the continuous struggle to consolidate and strengthen the support base of people's organisations, both within the community they work for and the community of potential disinterested gift-givers. In particular this is the case in the face of doubts about the outcomes and potential risks of collective protest actions, and where this struggle for support takes place in terms of competition with NGOs offering community members concrete, tangible goods such as water pumps, seeds, fertiliser or medicine in exchange for patron-client relationships of uncertain duration and strength. Where the NGO professional offers community members 'cargo', [49] the full-timer holds out the charismatic, radical promise of justice.

Less obviously, it may be that the full-timer draws spiritual sustenance from the renunciatory component of their relatively higher moral status. This was apparently the case for at least one of my informants. Sangeeta[50] had been a full-timer with a people's organisation for several years before leaving the organisation and joining an NGO, a decision she told me that she had taken in order to enable a lifestyle in which she could spend time with her new husband and look after her new child. "If you ask me why I joined an NGO, the answer is simple: money," she said to me.

> Whatever you do in life you do for something; you get some kick out of it, that's why you do it. You probably even get a kick out of doing the research you are doing. When I was a full-timer, what I got was the kick you get out of telling others "Look, I'm more committed than you, I don't get paid an NGO salary to do what I do, I do it because I am committed." That's the kick you get out being a full-timer. Then my needs changed and I joined an NGO. Priya[51] [another full-timer] blames that on me getting married; she said I should never have got married. (Fieldnotes)

However, it is not full-timers alone who draw spiritual sustenance from this moral dichotomy, because most of my informants frequently speak about this issue in terms of a *hierarchy* of virtue, a sliding scale rather than an either-or, black-or-white judgment. NGO workers may be morally inferior to the full-timers of people's organisations, but they are morally superior to individuals working for government, political parties, or CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives. I want to focus here on the last of these; I will discuss the first two later, although I note here that the principal objections to these are that government workers 'hold power over' the community and political party workers will say or do anything to win votes in order to win power – both are therefore involved in a dirty world of political power that my informants distance themselves from (see Jenkins ref and Ruud 2001 on this). In contrast, the 'dirtiness' of CSR comes from the money, which is seen as 'blood money' in a way that NGO funding whose source is government taxation in India or abroad is not. In this sense CSR initiatives might be seen as the absolute opposite of a disinterested gift, the ultimate impure gift because the interest of the giver is to compensate for or silence protest about a corporate crime that the giver usually will not even admit to. One of the most prominent examples of this is Dow Chemical, who manage many CSR initiatives in India but none in Bhopal because to conduct a CSR initiative in Bhopal would be interpreted as an admission of guilt for the 1984 disaster [give company quote].

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[49] I owe the idea of 'NGOs as cargo cults' to a personal communication from Lola Martinez; as far as I know, this way of conceptualising NGOs has not been written about.
[50] Name changed.
[51] Name changed.

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However, for my informants the relationship of money to the hierarchy of virtue is more complicated than a simple question of its source. What is also important is the individual's attitude towards money. A number of my informants who were working in NGOs pointed out to me that they had all the qualifications, skills, experience and social status necessary to get far more lucrative jobs outside the NGO sector. Therefore, one reasoned, "if my market value is placed at a lakh [100 000] a month and I earn Rs20 000 a month then that would be my idea of what I have voluntarily conceded to social action" (Interview transcript). It may be that this situation is especially prevalent in health NGOs, where a higher proportion of the staff can be expected to have medical qualifications adequate for private practice. This being said, in recent years there has been an influx of new development actors into India offering consultancy contracts to NGO professionals at rates previously unheard of in the NGO sector, with the result that there are now many people working on health issues in the NGO sector and earning better salaries than they would be if they were private practitioners. A woman who had recently taken a job as head of CSR for a large multinational company explained to me that she knew her friends working with NGOs and people's organisations would be critical of this, and justified her decision by saying,

> I have given 25 years of my life to the NGO sector. Now I have two pairs of aging parents who I am expected to support by myself. Besides which, the CSR budget for this company is huge, and if it is going to be distributed to different development projects, then at least it should be distributed by someone who distributes it to good projects. (Fieldnotes)

I discussed this justification with Yashwant,[52] who had told me he had turned down an offer for a consultancy position with the Global Fund at several times the salary of his current position in an NGO. He responded, "People like that make it very difficult for people like me to continue to do the work we are doing" (Fieldnotes).[53]

As well as being discussed in relation to specific individuals, the question of being 'in it for the money' came up in discussions of organisations. In a comparison of an NGO and a people's organisation, both of them involved in implementation of the Community-based Monitoring of Health Services government programme (see below), an informant told me that the NGO had responded to a delay in the transfer of funds by declaring that they would be unable to proceed with the work until the funds arrived. The people's organisation responded by saying the work would go on according to schedule regardless of when the funds arrived. "That's the difference [between NGOs and people's organisations]," he said.

Finally, these ideas about not being 'in it for the money' lead to rights-based NGO professionals' concept of voluntarism. The focus of the everyday, paid work of these individuals is the management of projects with which their organisation is involved. If they become involved in additional, unpaid work – for example, work with collectives such as *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* – then this additional work is seen as voluntary. It is seen

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[52] Name changed.

[53] There have been interesting debates about this in the community of my informants in terms of unionisation within the NGO sector (see also Sharma 2006: 73). Some well-known and prominent figures in the scene have been steadfastedly against this, and a coalition of other people in this community have formed a group to press for this. One of the issues at stake here is expressed in Sahlins' adage that "one man's gift should not be another man's capital" (cited in Copeman 2009: 13). The question is, does the pay differential between an NGO's senior staff and 'rank-and-file' staff reflect its values, or are the seniors well-rewarded for their work in financial terms while the rank-and-file are expected to supplement their small financial reward with the spiritual reward of being engaged in 'noble work' and not being 'in it for the money'? Does the NGO's senior pass on to the junior's 'gift' to its intended recipients, or is the senior exploiting the junior and in the process 'degifting' the gift (Callon, cited in Copeman 2009: 13)? There is a moral ambiguity here.

to approximate the ideal of disinterested giving, as there is no expectation of financial return to the volunteer; the volunteer simply does the work out of belief in its goodness, in the righteousness of the cause, and solidarity. Any benefits that return to the volunteer are only insofar as the volunteer is part of the "general public" who is the recipient of the gift (Mayer 1981: 169). The next section explores this idea further with reference to anthropological work on the idea of a pure or free gift.

2. The Pure Gift and Parasitic Voluntarism

In his essay *The Gift* (1990), Mauss is widely understood as arguing that while most people think of gifts as disinterested, in fact they never are; rather, they always function to encourage reciprocity. Gift-giving therefore played and plays a vital role in building social relations in primitive societies, something that modern societies have largely forgotten as they have tended to valorise one-off, contractual transactions between rational, self-interested actors in the market place – that is, transactions of a type that is antithetical to the repeating, reciprocal relationships of gift-giving.

In a recent article, Laidlaw (2008) argues that this is not Mauss's argument at all, and that the principal problem with this interpretation is that the role of disinterested giving in Mauss's argument is reduced to nothing more than an irrelevant puzzle. The disinterested or free gift becomes nothing more than a nice story that we tell ourselves, something that Mauss has proved never actually happens in practice; the puzzle is why we continue to think of it as an ideal. Drawing on Derrida's reading of Mauss (Derrida 1992? Ref), Laidlaw suggests that in fact the disinterested or free gift *is* only an ideal, but it is an ideal that is key for the actual practice of gift exchange: it is only because the free gift is present as an ideal – as an ideally possible but practically impossible possibility – that gifts are exchanged. As he puts it succinctly, "[g]ifts evoke obligations and create reciprocity, but they can do this because they might not: what creates the obligation is the gesture or moment which alienates the given thing and asks for no reciprocation" (Laidlaw 2008: 628).

However, Laidlaw notes that there are some instances of gift-giving that attempt to approximate the ideal of the free gift that does not evoke obligations or ask for reciprocation. In South Asianist anthropology, the instance that has been focused on is *dan*; Laidlaw, for example, bases his discussion on the giving of alms to Jain renouncers. Parry (1986) has argued that the ideal of the free gift emerges in a context where all forms of reciprocal relationship, whether market/commodity-based or gift-based, get tarred with the same dirty brush. In the following discussion all of these ideas are of some relevance for understanding the voluntarism of my informants.

Central to the way my informants' unpaid voluntarism works is the fact that it is 'parasitic' on their paid employment, but the precise relation between the paid and unpaid work varies; we can, for instance, differentiate between individual voluntarism and organisational voluntarism. An example of individual voluntarism is that many face-to-face meetings between members of the JSA NCC take place around the edges of meetings to do with their paid work. If Rajiv[54] needs to travel from Delhi to Mumbai for a meeting relating to a paid NGO project, he can make use of this opportunity to meet Mumbai-based representatives of JSA. An example of organisational voluntarism was

[54] Name changed.

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SATHI taking responsibility for the national secretariat for JSA without funding for this. Dr Sudhir explained:

> You see, if we have certain projects, we have certain staff supported through various projects but besides doing A, B, C, D which is specified in the project, you can do E and F also. So for roughly two-and-a-half years, there was no institutional funding for the secretariat, in a formal sense. That needs to be kept in mind: that of the period that we handled the secretariat, half of the period there was no institutional funding for it. (Interview transcript)

Describing the voluntarism of NGO professionals as 'parasitic' captures certain aspects of what is going on, but it also appears to be slightly misleading. A parasite is usually understood to damage its host; but in the two examples given above, no additional financial expense is incurred as a result of the voluntary action. Rajiv was travelling to Mumbai *anyway*, SATHI was going to pay salaries to the staff members who handled the secretariat *anyway*. However, it is ultimately the money the giver receives for the activities they *are* paid to do that makes their unpaid work possible, and this money comes from a governmental or non-governmental development donor agency. Therefore we can think of parasitic voluntarism as involving at least four actors: the donor agency, the NGO professional doing the work s/he is paid to do, the activist doing voluntary work, the beneficiary(s) of the voluntary work (see figure 2). Of crucial importance here is the fact that the NGO professional and the activist are the same person, and that the difference between them as actors is between the individual doing what is in his/her self-interest to do because it is part of his/her job, and the individual doing what s/he or his/her organisation has decided to do on a voluntary basis. The staff of the development donor agency may or may not be aware of the unpaid, voluntary activities of the individuals and organisations which they are providing money to for particular paid activities. There is no ethical or legal reason why they *should* be aware: they have a contractual relationship with Rajiv or SATHI, Rajiv or SATHI is fulfilling their side of the contract, and that is all they need to know. Having said this, it seems that quite often at least some staff of the agency are aware of the voluntary activities of the organisations which they are providing money to. This may be because the relationship between donor and recipient extends beyond the specific, time-bound content of their formal contract; it is more than a one-off, contractual transaction between rational, self-interested actors in the market place.

Fig. 2

For example, during the period of my fieldwork, the Government of India's Community-based Monitoring of Health Services programme was populated from top to bottom by members of *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan*. I have written elsewhere (Donegan forthcoming) about the way in which a subset of the organisations involved in the programme carried out a modified version of the programme which they referred to as 'community monitoring plus'. 'Community monitoring plus' included all elements of the programme's official framework for implementation, but also went beyond them in order to make more effective use of the spaces for negotiation and mass action that the programme created but did not fully utilise. Going beyond the official framework did not require any additional financial expense, although it obviously did make greater demands on the time and energies of those involved. 'Community monitoring plus' can therefore be understood as a composite of paid and voluntary activities. For our current purposes, what is important to note is that the members of the national-level body charged with the

dispersal of funds for the programme were aware of 'community monitoring plus', at least in part because many of them had been present or been made aware of the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* National Coordination Committee meetings in which the idea of 'community monitoring plus' had been discussed and debated.

This does not mean that the voluntary work is the gift of the donor agency, and it is particularly apparent that this is the case where the organisation has multiple sources of funding. Most if not all of the NGOs I encountered during my fieldwork are continuously engaged in multiple projects, each one usually funded by a different development donor agency. It is often the case that a single office houses the staff working on all of these projects, and these staff share computers, phones, files, the assistance of the office's administrative team and amenities. Consequently it makes no sense to suggest that exactly what a particular project budget covers can be separated from other project budgets, and funding for overheads are effectively subsumed into a single pot. In this way, if I were to ask my informants from which particular funding agency money came from for a particular voluntary activity, the question would probably be difficult if not impossible to answer accurately. To use Sudhir's language, money from agencies A, B, C and D goes into SATHI's account, and SATHI completes the activities required by these four projects and then also completes voluntary activities E and F. Therefore the voluntary activity should be considered a gift from SATHI rather than from one of the four donor agencies supporting SATHI; it comes from SATHI's 'organisational voluntarism'.

To summarise, what we have is a chain in which one of the links is the 'parasitic voluntarism' described here, a voluntary action that 'piggybacks', that exists 'on the back of' the paid work of NGO staff by utilising a surplus generated through efficient use within the NGO of resources provided by development donor agencies and earmarked for specific projects. The question that follows is 'what motivates my informants to do this? What drives them to try to approximate the ideal of a free, disinterested gift?' Or, as Laidlaw puts it, "[w]hy should anyone go to all this trouble not to create social relations?" (2008: 626).

To answer this question we can begin by observing that the concept of parasitic voluntarism that I have described here involves two moves: first, a distinction is made between paid and voluntary work, and second, the latter is made parasitic on the former. The foregoing analysis explains the first move: in the hierarchy of virtue of the rights-based NGO professional, unpaid work is morally superior to paid work. What is interesting about the second move is that it enables the moral justification or legitimation of the paid work. To understand this we can turn to the debates around the idea of 'community monitoring plus' that took place within the JSA NCC. At one JSA NCC meeting that I attended, a note on community monitoring plus was circulated to participants which argued that JSA should "[make use of] this opportunity for widest possible community awareness building, mobilisation on health rights and dialogue with decision makers at various levels" (NCC member 2007: 3; see also Donegan forthcoming). This argument was presented against an (anticipated) counter-argument that would suggest that JSA should not become involved in the implementation of government programmes because JSA is a social movement that must necessarily adopt a radical, confrontational stance in relation to government. In this context, the concept of 'community monitoring plus' was used to justify working 'with' government in programme implementation, on the basis that doing so provided an opportunity for doing movement work within the system. That is, the justification for the morally inferior, non-

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radical paid work (community monitoring) is that it provides an opportunity for morally superior, radical voluntary work (community monitoring plus) that parasitically 'piggybacks' it. This is an important point which chimes with de Certeau's work on subversive practices of consumption (1984) but also makes a point which he does not make: that his argument turns the possibility of subversion into an excuse for consumption.

Finally, what this analysis leads us to is the realisation that both the paid work and the voluntary work are parasitic on each other. While the voluntary work is *materially* dependent on the paid work (it could not happen without the resources the paid work makes available), the paid work is *morally* dependent on the voluntary work (without the 'plus' element, community monitoring is just a government programme of low moral value) (see figure 3).

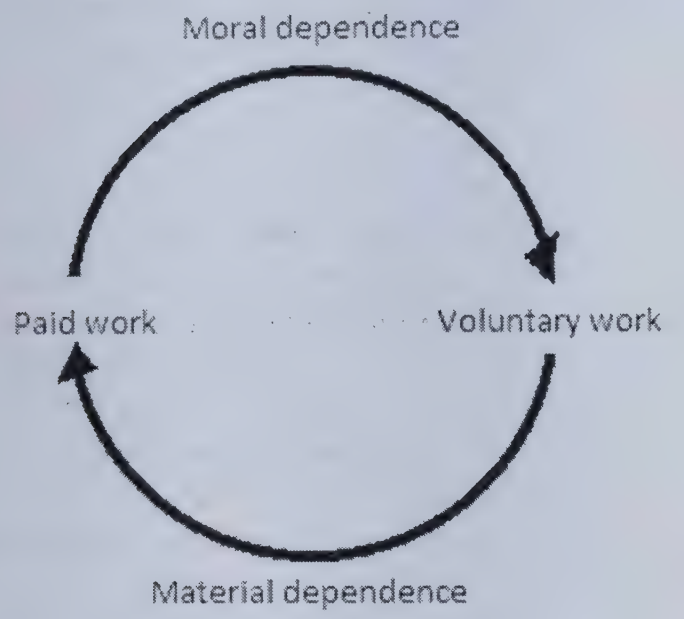

Fig. 3

In this analysis, the concept of parasitic voluntarism appears to be a mechanism for the moral justification – the purification – of paid NGO work. It is a rationalisation of paid NGO work as a practice, articulated by rights-based NGO professionals who support people's organisations and the perspective on social change they espouse. For such individuals, the concept of parasitic voluntarism justifies their position as 'second best' in the hierarchy of gifts, i.e. 'we would ideally like to be full-timers but due to other obligations – i.e. family, debt, etc. – we do the next best thing which is to support full-timers to whatever extent we can, given the personal constraints we face'. In fact, formulated in this way this morally 'second best' position is *the* best possible under the conditions of competing obligations they face.

But this is not actually an answer to Laidlaw's question but simply its deferral, because now we need to ask why my informants find it necessary to morally justify and rationalise their practice. Who is questioning the activities of rights-based NGOs so that my informants must defend them? The short answer is 'everyone'. The History chapter of this thesis mentioned three angles from which NGOs in general and rights-based NGOs in particular have been criticised: the government condemn them as elements of 'external subversion', the mainstream left parties reformulate this critique in terms of imperialist

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conspiracy, and the radical left judge them to be controlled by the State and rendered apolitical or depoliticising, functioning to channel the legitimate anger and energy of the masses into reformist community development. Each of these three actors – government, mainstream left, radical left – refuse the hierarchy of virtue I have described here and attributed to NGO professionals; each of them has their own hierarchy of virtue that places themselves at or near the top (describing these hierarchies in full would go beyond the scope of my argument here, but see Gellner (2010b: 4) for a discussion). When we take into account that alongside these politically-motivated critiques many NGO professionals also have to deal with criticisms and pressure from family and friends who think they should be working in far more lucrative and prestigious sectors (see the quotes from Sangeeta and Yashwant above), we see that the belief of NGO professionals in the moral superiority of their career choice and commitment can be crucial for them – as has been argued by anthropologists studying the field of social action in other South Asian countries (Arvidson 2008; Heaton Shrestha 2010). The concept of parasitic voluntarism meets this need, providing a way of reasserting autonomy, agency, radicalism and the disinterestedness of their gift in response to their critics.

However, in practice the concept of parasitic voluntarism creates problems of its own; most notably, the individual must manage the tensions between the demands imposed by his/her non-radical professional (paid) and radical activist (voluntary) identities. These tensions are the focus of the following section.

3. The poison in the gift

The first phase of the Government of India's Community-based Monitoring of Health Services programme involved three elements: first, committees created at village, Primary Health Centre (PHC), block (sub-district), district and state level, second, data collected by these committees on health service provision, and third, *jan sunwais* (public hearings) where these data were used to hold government officials to account. The programme involved substantial collaboration between government and civil society actors from start to finish. Members of JSA exerted an unprecedented degree of influence over the programme, partly because they had good relationships with Ministry of Health officials at the centre and at state-level.

Despite these good relationships, many government officials exhibited ambivalence towards the programme. On the one hand, senior Ministry of Health officials were struck by the potential for generating data on availability and quality of services which could then be triangulated with other sources of data. On the other, the decision to give primary responsibility for implementation to civil society organisations led many government officials to think of it as an NGO programme (i.e. not a government programme) aimed at drawing attention to the government's failures, an impression reinforced by the fact that representatives of civil society organisations designed the programme and were also given primary responsibility for the selection of implementing organisations. In Maharashtra, programme implementation was coordinated by SATHI, which had played a leading role in designing the programme and, as the host of the JSA national secretariat at the time, ensuring that most of the participating organisations were JSA member organisations. When large number of Marathi, Hindi and English newspapers[55] reported

[55] SATHI has some of these articles on their website at http://www.sathicehat.org/uploads/CurrentProjects/Media_Coverage.jpg, and notes in their report that to date "over 200 news items have been published in national, state and regional level news papers" on the community monitoring programme in Maharashtra (Kakde 2010: 59).

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on the *jan sunwais* in Maharashtra in a highly sensationalist fashion, portraying the public healthcare system as in a state of collapse, SATHI was at the receiving end of expressions of anger and outrage from the Ministry. As one NGO professional quipped, the anger towards SATHI exhibited by the Ministry officials who had helped make the programme possible was reminiscent of a proverb, "*Hamari billi ham hi ko miaon*" (Hindi: This is my cat and it is miaowing at me)" (Fieldnotes).

This situation neatly captures the tension between the two identities created by parasitic voluntarism, what one member of the SATHI team described as SATHI's "diversified image" (Fieldnotes); another example may help us understand how actors respond to this tension. At the time of my fieldwork, the funded activities of SATHI included coordinating community monitoring in Maharashtra, playing a leading role in training village-level health workers for the government as part of the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) programme, and conducting research on health equity in Maharashtra in collaboration with other members of JSA in Maharashtra (see chapter 5 for more on JSA in Maharashtra). In early 2008 SATHI launched a report on health equity in Maharashtra (ref) at a press conference in Mumbai. The launch generated a level of media coverage far in excess of what had been expected, partly because, as with the community monitoring coverage, SATHI had employed the services of a media advocate to nurture relations with the press, and partly because the award-winning development journalist P. Sainath (author of *Everybody Loves A Good Drought* (ref)) had agreed to take part in the launch. As with the community monitoring coverage several months later, the news articles written on the launch were sensationalist, emphasising problems with health service provision and neglecting the report's focus on comparison between the health indicators of different categories of population. After receiving an angry phone call from a Ministry official, the SATHI team decided to discourage journalists who approached them to write stories based around the launch. One member of the SATHI team recalled:

> The Ministry was saying "What is this, we're reading in all the newspapers and TV and radio and they're all saying the same thing, they've picked up the worst points". So we decided we had to cut down the publicity because we are at the same time working with government, and this comes across as opposition to the government. The people's organisations don't face this, because they are *always* oppositional to the government, their position is fixed. What is needed in this case is a balance – on the one hand we want the information out there; on the other hand we don't want the media jumping on it in quite the way they did, because we want to keep working with the government. (Fieldnotes)

Viewed in the light of the analysis presented earlier in this chapter, the point here is that government officials do not see SATHI in terms of a diversified image, a portfolio of identities, some radical and confrontational, others diplomatic and open to compromise and negotiation. Government officials see SATHI as SATHI, as an organisation with a singular identity, and decide how cooperative to be in their interactions with SATHI based on past experiences. This means that when deciding on a course of action, SATHI must always consider how that course of action will impact on SATHI's relationships with various actors and constrain SATHI's options in future. Ultimately, however, no matter how strategic SATHI is when taking such decisions, every action they take will shape how other actors think of SATHI and how they decide to respond to SATHI's actions in future.

I suggested this to one senior staff member of SATHI as we sat in a car in rush hour traffic at the end of 2008. He acknowledged my point, saying "It is a hard line to walk." He went on to tell me that in Hindu mythology the Gods and Demons churned the sea in order to obtain the nectar of immortality, but in the process a poison (*Halahala*) was produced which was so powerful that it would kill everyone. The Gods and Demons

called on Shiva to consume the poison since he was already immortal, and when he did so the poison made his throat turn blue.[56] He ended the story by telling me "So if SATHI can create a situation in which other organisations get the opportunity to better do what they want to do and my neck turns blue as a result, that's ok with me" (Fieldnotes). The claim here is that his organisation can become the fall guy, the scapegoat (Douglas 1995) who sacrifices himself so that others can go on. By doing so, *Halahala* is taken by SATHI so that others do not have to take it, as in the Shiva story. What he did not acknowledge, however, is that the taking of *Halahala* is purifying, and would elevate the moral standing of SATHI so that the organisation becomes morally superior to those who are not full-timers and who do not take *Halahala*.

The parallel with Raheja's analysis of 'the poison in the gift' (1988, 1989) is instructive, if initially confusing. While Raheja argues that the gift is given in order to remove inauspiciousness (i.e. the 'poison') from the giver by passing it on to the recipient, here it is Shiva's acceptance of the poison that purifies him. The confusion disappears once we understand that Shiva's acceptance of *Halahala* is a selfless act performed for the good of others, i.e. it is his gift to others. Thus Shiva's acceptance of *Halahala* is in fact the passing on of 'the poison in the gift' to those who benefit from his act. Here, then, I want to examine some of the ways the poison in the gift is manifested in parasitic voluntarism.

The most obvious point to make here is that some people have accused some rights-based NGO professionals of benefitting disproportionately from their voluntarism – in particular, it has been argued that their organisations have had project proposals accepted by funding agencies on the basis of voluntary work attributed to them but actually carried out by a larger collective including individuals from other organisations. There are two arguments here. First, highly visible organisational voluntarism paradoxically makes you eminently fundable because it means you're doing things for the right reasons, with the right intentions, virtuously rather than self-interestedly – which is a great selling point in the highly competitive market for development project funding where value for money is critical (Arvidson 2008: 119). Second, there is a not insignificant niche market for radical posturing among both domestic and international development funding agencies and benefactors of social movements; as one informant put it, "there's a danger for civil society that there is too much stake and reward for failure of the government. A prophet of doom is likely to rise higher, much faster, [and with] much more international visibility" (Interview transcript). Put bluntly, the argument is that the NGO professional engages in voluntary work out of self-interest, with the expectation that it will lead to paid work. This point takes us back to the question of the purity of intentions, which is often the basis for claims about the moral standing of a particular actor precisely because the answer can never be known with certainty. Here the drawing of straight lines of causation can always be challenged; it is not difficult for the accused to dismiss the accuser as a bitter, malicious rumour-monger. Even so, the beliefs that motivate such accusations can have real effects. For example, senior staff of one NGO explained to me that they had stopped being actively involved in JSA for this reason:

> [They] told us, "No, you're wrong; what's the problem, things are not as you're saying they are." They think – perhaps you also think – what's the big deal? But it matters because it changed how [JSA] works. We observed the changes and decided to reduce our involvement. You can't say, and I can't say, that x leads inevitably to y so because x happens you pull out. But if you see y happening, for whatever reason, by whatever cause, and you don't like y – then you pull out. And that's what we did. (Notes from interview)

[56] Copeman notes that this myth is also invoked to recruit blood donors in India (2009: 72).

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Parasitic voluntarism can also dramatically affect power relations between NGO professionals and actors who are not directly benefiting from the NGO professional's gift. One informant who had several years' experience working as a NGO professional but no involvement with JSA told me about a national network of human rights activists based around a well-funded NGO in Mumbai. The coordinator of this NGO, Aditya,[57] gives money to activists – some working as full-timers with people's organisations, some working independently, some running small NGOs – in exchange for those activists referring to themselves as members of his network. Aditya then meets with politicians. In these meetings, who is Aditya? He is a representative of the people's movements, a representative of a network of activists, and it is this identity that gives him legitimacy when he speaks to a politician. In fact, according to the hierarchy of virtue of the rights-based NGOs, he has more legitimacy than the politician, who is polluted by the pragmatism that is a necessary aspect of the work that he does and the compromises he makes. After one such meeting, my informant heard Aditya say of the politician "He's alright, for a politician." With this statement Aditya puts the politician down and reminds his audience of his own superior position as a representative of the movements. My informant's point was this: if you look at the *facts* of how that politician has reached where he is and what he has achieved for 'the people', and compare it with how Aditya has reached where he is and what he has achieved for 'the people', then "who looks dirtier? Aditya" (Fieldnotes). It matters that Aditya is a representative of the movements rather than merely the representative of his own NGO because many audiences reject the rights-based NGO professional's hierarchy of virtue which places NGOs above politicians, but accept that the movements are morally superior to politicians.

What is also instructive in this case is to look at how people came to see the movements as morally superior to politicians. Chapter 2 argued that from a Brahmin perspective the political realm was polluted by the arrival of lower caste politicians, and that it was in this context that NGOs were purified as a field of action motivated by principle rather than self-interest. What the story of Aditya shows is the disjuncture between this vision and a reality in which both Aditya and the politician use influence and money that is not theirs to get where they are, and both of them must be pragmatic and, at times, unprincipled in order to succeed. The only difference stems from the influence of the Lokayan narrative, which means that Aditya is situated within a field which has been Brahminised, and the politician is situated within a field that has been dalitised. Aditya may or may not be a Brahmin and the politician may or may not be a lower caste; this does not matter when the fields in which they stand have already been differentiated in this way.

Derne has critiqued Raheja's analysis, arguing that what she is describing is true of the gifts given by Kshatriyas, but not true of the gifts given by lower castes. An important element in the Gandhian movement was that Brahmins would go eat with dalits. What did this mean? The dalit would cook and feed the Brahmin and the Brahmin would return home and say "I have eaten with dalit" and would then be seen as higher status. So in fact what we learn here is that it is the position, not the giving of the gift, that determines who benefits from the gift; the gift merely reaffirms existing power relations.

The parasitic voluntarist's gift does not always succeed in modifying power relations between the NGO professional and other actors. A participant in JSA from the Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health at JNU discussed with me the relationship

[57] Name changed.

between CSMCH and JSA, emphasising that it was individuals within the Centre who had relationships with JSA rather than the Centre itself:

> we can't get into any kind of organisational link-up with [JSA], simply because there are all these issues of money. It becomes very peculiar, you see? When I am invited to a JSA [event], every time somebody picks up my tab. It's *embarrassing*. They must be deciding "Ok, this time you pay for Mohan [Rao] and this time you pay for Imrana [Qadeer], this time you pay for Ritu Priya", something like that. And here we are, then, ostensibly not receiving funds, *but* benefiting from somebody else who is receiving funds. It is an odd moral situation to be in. A lot of people [in JSA] feel there is no problem with funds, and no problem with foreign funds, whereas others do think it's a big problem. And I tend to be *sympathetic* towards those who think there is a problem. (Interview transcript)

What is interesting here is that the academic talks of this situation as 'embarrassing' rather than as a serious problem, because the academic is already in a morally superior position, because academia is more pure than the field of social action. The academic would rather not receive the money, recognising that accepting the money in return for his/her participation involves a shift from working 'with' JSA to working 'for' JSA (although s/he did not explicitly put it in these terms). However, for the academic it is not a serious problem, since the gift ultimately fails to place the NGO professional in a morally superior position to the academic: the academic who accepts the invitation to attend the JSA assembly is in the same position as the Gandhian Brahmin who accepts food from a dalit. The rights-based NGO professionals know this, too, and what is interesting is how they continue to attempt to position themselves as morally superior to the academics by shifting from the material strategy of gift-giving to the discursive strategy of differentiating between 'action' and 'research' as two distinct types of activity and placing the former as morally superior to the latter. One NGO professional even invoked a metaphor of caste in explaining this, telling me a story of how he had refused an invitation to join CSMCH by telling Dr Banerji "You are Brahmin and we are Chamars" (Notes from interview) – the implication being that Brahmins are only interested in understanding the world, whereas Chamars, as dalits, must work to change it (a distinction which, of course, comes from Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach).

Commenting on the international People's Health Assembly in Dhaka in 2000, this academic suggested an analysis which would suggest that not only does the parasitic voluntarist's gift fail to modify the power relation between the NGO professional and the academic, but it fails to modify the power relation between the NGO professional and 'the people' too, and for similar reasons:

> [M]y impressions of the fairly large number of people at the international level involved with the [People's Health Assembly] is that they are profoundly ignorant. They are very suspicious of the idea of theory, or 'no we don't have time for all that, we have to *do things*', ok? And I think there is a politics to that too [*laughs*]. The kind of 'we need to get people from the grassroots [to speak at the Assembly]'. Why should we get people from the grassroots? Only people from the grassroots know what is happening in the world, is it? Oh no. It's very clear why you want people from the grassroots, because people from the grassroots are not going to tell [you] to just mind your own business, we know something better. [*Pause; lights cigarette*] So actually there are so many good academics in the West who could have been involved. And it's only very few who are there. (Interview transcript)

In this analysis, the NGO professional projects himself as an expert[58] whose expertise is based on hot, tactile first-hand or second-hand experience of action in 'the field' and whose moral status derives from his commitment to 'the people'; in contrast, the academic's expertise is based on cold, detached theory and an (a)moral, value-neutral commitment to 'research for research's sake'. Here is not the place to contest this vision,

[58] Recall here Ramanathan's comparison of the World Health Assembly and People's Health Assembly, quoted at the start of the previous chapter.

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although we can note that most in CSMCH probably think of their academic work as Bourdieu did, as "an indirect way of doing politics" (Wacquant 2004: 5, 9-12); here the point is that in this analysis, the relation between the NGO professional and the 'people from the grassroots' at the Assembly is the same as the relation between the Gandhian Brahmin and the dalit whose food he accepts.

A good point on which to end this discussion is to return to the story of Shiva mentioned above, and to note that Shiva took the poison because if he did not do so then others would die. The danger faced by Shiva was never the same as the danger faced by others, because of his status as an incarnation of Vishnu. This does not mean he faced no danger – after all, his neck turned blue and remained blue thereafter – but that he faced a lesser danger. The same is true of the NGO professional who engages in parasitic voluntarism. The distinction is similar to that between Arundhati Roy who, at the time of writing, is taking up the Kashmir issue which has come back into the headlines both in India and abroad as a result of the stone thrower movement. Speaking out on this issue has led to a situation where there is an outcry against her from Hindu nationalists, many calling for her to be charged with sedition, some calling for her to be executed and the RSS claiming that they are going to 'fix her up'. Thus she faces a threat; her neck may turn blue. But the threat she faces is not the same threat faced by the stone throwers. A feeling of solidarity pushes the NGO professional to try to move towards the position of the oppressed Other, but he can never reach that position. One way of understanding why this is the case is to recognise that in spite of the constraints imposed by a 'diversified image', the NGO professional who straddles the divide between his non-radical professional (paid) and radical activist (voluntary) identities will always have much more influence over how other actors see him than the full-timer or Kashmiri stone thrower does – and therefore much more choice.[59] Even if an NGO professional sits on the ground with the villagers when attending their village meeting, it remains the case that when nightfall comes he will return to his *pukka* (proper) house or hotel room. For this reason the figure of the NGO professional is marked by a Lacanian lack which we might refer to as 'activist envy'.

[59] One participant in a discussion of Operation Green Hunt – an anti-Naxalite government action in 2009 [check details] – on an online mailing list made the same point by drawing on Partha Chatterjee's distinction between civil and political society, arguing that middle-class individuals positioned in metro cities are better able to cross the line from political society to civil society than the adivasi in a village where Operation Green Hunt is in force (see the Introduction to this thesis).

5. Collectives: Networks, inertia and the performance of groups

Introduction

> The [People's Health] Charter as a statement of intentions is very good. But there are lots of things it doesn't say. One of the things it doesn't say is how are we going to go about it. (Member of JSA NCC, interview transcript)

This chapter seeks to answer two questions: "What is JSA?" and "Why is it so hard to specify exactly what JSA is?" While chapter 3 alerted us to the fact that different people say very different things about both the campaign in 2000 and JSA, and argued that one reason for this was factionalism, this chapter argues that another reason is the influence on JSA of the ideas about voluntarism discussed in chapter 4. It was noted at the start of chapter 4 that from the outset JSA faced a problem because while on the one hand JSA wants to avoid becoming like an organisation because of the view that institutionalisation would take JSA away from 'the people', on the other hand JSA also wants to be an entity that 'does things', which involves mobilising resources, which involves becoming like an organisation. Parasitic voluntarism offers a solution to this problem that has certain effects; while the chapter 4 explored the effects on relations between the parasitic voluntarist and other social actors, this chapter explores the effects on what JSA *is* (i.e. the effects on voluntar*ism* as a set of activities, rather than on the voluntar*ist* as an actor).

Latour's concept of inertia is a useful device for framing the chapter's argument. The chapter argues that to the extent that JSA exists in a network form at the margins of other activities on which it piggybacks, its existence is shaped by those activities and the actors involved in them in a way that an organisation's existence is not. For Latour, an organisation is endowed with an inertia which means that it continues to exist even if it stops acting, while JSA, lacking inertia, has no existence other than its actions and so simply ceases to exist if it stops acting; it is the subject of performative rather than ostensive definition (Latour 2005: 34). Similarly, a change of personnel may change how an organisation works but it does not change the *nature* of the organisation, whereas in JSA, a change of personnel makes a substantive difference to what JSA *is*. The converse is also true: to the extent that JSA has an existence independent of other activities and the actors involved in them, JSA is endowed with an inertia which makes its existence more like that of an organisation.

An example may make the argument clearer. Dr Ameya, the coordinator of SATHI, is also the coordinator for the Maharashtra state chapter of the People's Health Movement, known as *Jan Arogya Abhiyan* in Marathi and often referred to by members as JAA. In my initial interactions with the SATHI team, it seemed logical that I would follow the JAA network 'outwards' from Pune to other districts, where JAA member organisations engaged in work with rural communities were based. In my early meetings with staff of JAA member organisations, one question I asked was "Which JSA activities have you been involved in?" It made sense to me to pose this question because in the SATHI office my attention had been drawn to a list of JSA activities since the formation of JSA in the year 2000. However, posing this question to staff members of JAA member organisations other than SATHI often resulted in some confusion.

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In an interview conducted in her house before a community monitoring workshop, in a district headquarters far from Pune, Preeti[60] explained that apart from mentioning her organisation's participation in the JSA's Right to Health Care (RTHC) campaign in 2003-4 and biannual JAA meetings, she found it difficult to answer the question because, she said, "it is difficult to categorise which activities come under JSA, [and] which activities come under, say, MoU [Memorandum of Understanding] of other organisations. We had some activities with SATHI, and some with MAHILA[61] [a rights-based NGO working on women's health] also, but not under the title of JSA, separately" (Interview transcript). The activities with SATHI and MAHILA were funded project partnerships, but for Preeti the difficulty of differentiating these from voluntary JSA activities stems in part from the fact that it is the same organisations involved in both and, in fact, "we got tied up with different organisations for their projects, which we came to know through JSA" (Interview transcript). I would suggest that the confusion in this dialogue emerged because I was asking the wrong question: JSA wants to remain at the margins of other activities, and yet here I was asking for a direct account of what it *is*, in the mistaken belief that JSA should be understood as being like an organisation separate to the other activities on which it piggybacks.

In this chapter I argue that if we want to understand JSA as being like an organisation we *can* do so, but doing so vastly narrows the scope of what we are looking at until all we see is the RTHC campaign hearings and the meetings, and would be to miss what is perhaps most important about JSA, which is that it is an attempt to create a non-organisational way of working together as a collective. While showing that it is possible to look at JSA as a network or as being like an organisation, ultimately I argue that it is more useful to think of JSA as a community of individuals that finds different official/unofficial, formal/informal, legal/grey area ways of identifying themselves in order to do the different types of things they want to do within the laws and social norms that govern the Indian field of social action. I believe the argument of this chapter is worth making because of the frequency with which I have observed people misunderstanding what a particular collective is or treating as equivalent two collectives that are very different. My question to Preeti is an example of the first; the exchange between Hardt (2004) and Mertes (2004) cited in the introduction of this thesis is an example of the second.

To develop this argument, this chapter compares moments in JSA's history when it was more like a network with moments when it was more like an organisation, focusing primarily on examples from within Maharashtra. After chapter 4's attempt to situate JSA in a moral framework, this chapter returns to chapter 3's Latour-inspired approach of developing an argument through analysis of a historical process. Unlike chapter 3, this chapter moves away from an emphasis on divergences between narratives, focusing instead on one narrative, my own, which is built out of components of my informants' narratives that I found most convincing, plausible, and interesting, and presents an account of how my informants' narratives fit together (i.e. a metanarrative [check]). I do not claim that mine is the true narrative of JSA; rather, I articulate this narrative in order to highlight the ways in which JSA can be – and is – different things to different people.

The chapter proceeds in four sections. The first section looks at JSA as a network, focusing on the early years of JAA, the Maharashtra chapter of JSA, as an example. The second section looks at JSA as being like an organisation, exploring critiques that

[60] Name changed.
[61] Name changed.

describe how JAA shifted from a network form to an increasingly institutionalised form. The third section argues that an important third way of looking at JSA is as a performance, meaning JSA as a useful hat to be put on or taken off at will by individuals.

1. JSA as network

The group that mobilised for the Indian People's Health Assembly in Kolkata in the year 2000 were not strangers, but part of a pre-existing community of activists who had known each other personally and professionally for years, many of whom had worked together on previous initiatives (see chapter 2). The most intangible but most significant effect of the Assembly was the intense feeling of solidarity produced as a result of so many activists being in the same place at the same time. Having grown used to the indifference of the world towards their attitudes and agendas, suddenly having so many like-minded individuals around them led to a feeling of wanting to keep those individuals around them and work together. But, as noted in the quote with which I opened this chapter, although those involved agreed on how they did *not* want to work together – as an organisation – they found it hard to agree on how they *did* want to work together.

Michel de Certeau's (1997) analysis of the movement of students and workers in May 1968 in France is a useful reference point for understanding the dilemmas of this moment in JSA's development. He argues that what was important in these events was the 'capture of speech', understanding this as a symbolic action which "escapes outside of structures, but in order to indicate what is *lacking* in them, namely, solidarity and the participation of those who are subjected to them" (1997: 10). In the spaces created by the events of May, everyone had the right to speak – but only if they spoke in their own name; "[t]he assembly refused to hear whoever was identified with a function or intervened in the name of a group...to speak is not to be the 'speaker' in the name of a lobby, of a 'neutral' and objective truth, or for convictions held elsewhere" (1997: 11). The creation of these spaces was an act of contestation that "could only be betrayed by every existing organisation, by every political procedure, or by every renewed institution"; by calling all structures into question, the movement lacked "every requisite program and idiom" so that "[i]n this society that it denounced, the movement could only be expressed marginally" (1997: 14). To institutionalise those spaces would be to betray them; to fail to do so would seem to doom them to irrelevance in the ongoing struggle to change society.[62]

What was chosen in the case of JSA was a compromise between these options, conscious of the dangers of both: JSA would be a voluntary collective, with a minimum of hierarchy. JSA took Dr Antia and Dr Banerji as intellectual figureheads (Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson respectively), chose Dr Ekbal of Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP, see chapter 2) as National Convenor and a number of Joint National Convenors to carry out Executive functions, and maintained the National Coordination Committee (NCC) set up for the campaign in 2000 as the main decision-making body (JSA undated:

[62] I use the word 'seem' here because I am departing from de Certeau's analysis; he does not think that they are irrelevant: "to conclude that it is meaningless would be to lose meaning, to put a mechanism in the place of a system of relations, and to suppose, ultimately, that a society can function without human beings" (1997: 10). This is explicitly a jab at the old Marxism and reminds me of the wife of the Marxist academic in Tom Stoppard's *Rock and Roll* who tells him "I am losing bits of my body to cancer but I am still more human than you".

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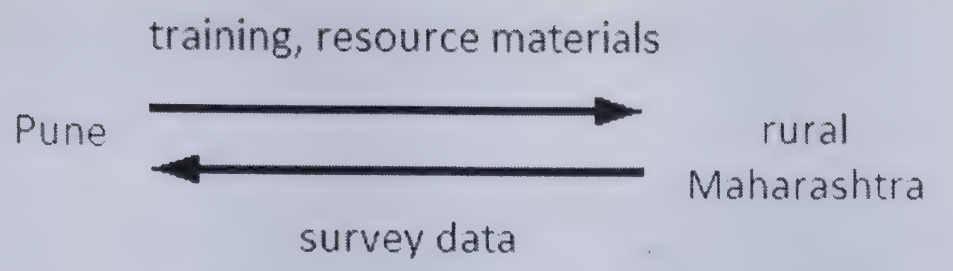
9). For the most part Ekbal kept his distance from the internal politics of JSA,[63] the NCC met biannually, and the PHA-NCC email group set up in 2000 played an important role in enabling conversations in between these meetings. It was decided there should be state chapters of JSA and that these should have state-level meetings and send representatives to NCC meetings which were, at that time, open to the Joint National Convenors and representatives of the national networks (see chapter 3).

In Maharashtra the campaign in 2000 had involved a variety of organisations in different capacities. A number of organisations spread across the state were affiliated with networks such as BGVS, CHAI or NAWO (National Alliance of Women's Organisations), and got involved in organising rallies and discussions on health-related themes in villages and *jan sunwais* (public hearings) at district headquarters; CEHAT and SATHI supported these activities by providing posters and other resource materials, and helping to organise what Dr Ameya described as a "somewhat hot dialogue" (Interview transcript) between the state Director of Health Services and approximately 300 people associated with the campaign. After the Kolkata assembly, regular communications and meetings led to the emergence of a strong state chapter of JSA committed to a particular 'network' mode of operation, which, Preeti explained, involves individuals bringing issues they want to push through the network, the discussion of these "in a democratic way" in a network meeting, and the commitment of others to participate in campaign activities agreed upon by consensus (Interview transcript). Dr Ameya told me that JAA campaigns took up issues "that require a broader-based coalition of member organisations or individuals", and were understood as voluntary activities distinct from each organisation's own agenda and everyday activities (Interview transcript).

From the start, a small number of pro-active JAA members based in Pune took the lead in introducing ideas for campaign activities. Here and in the next section of this chapter I focus on two of these organisations, MAHILA and SATHI, both rights-based NGOs with small teams of professionals working on funded projects based around partnerships with organisations in other parts of Maharashtra; in these partnerships, MAHILA and SATHI describe themselves as 'resource organisations'. It was noted in the introduction of this chapter that, looking back, Preeti sometimes found it hard to remember which of her organisation's activities were funded project activities of one or other of these organisations and which were voluntary JAA activities – perhaps partly because the differences between them were less significant than their similarities. Both sets of activities involve either the collection of information from rural Maharashtra (often through surveys) according to criteria identified by individuals based in Pune, or the sharing of information by individuals based in Pune with individuals based in rural Maharashtra (through training resources and workshops). Both MAHILA and SATHI employ office staff to manage the information at the Pune end, and fieldworkers to manage relationships with partners in rural Maharashtra (see chapter 4 and figure 1 below). Both sets of activities are described on the websites of MAHILA and SATHI, the difference being that project activities are described as activities carried out "by our organisation and our partners" and JAA activities are described as activities carried out "by our organisation and other organisations of JAA" – both these phrases referring to the same individuals in their capacities as NGO professionals in the former case, and activists in the latter (see chapter 4).

Fig. 1

[63] Although NAPM activists in Kerala felt their scope for involvement in JSA at state-level was limited, and that JSA in Kerala was in the hands of KSSP (Interview transcript).



In 2001 and 2002 several JSA activities stand out in my informants' narratives. First, the translation of the documents produced in the campaign in 2000 into regional languages.[64] Two other JSA activities emerged at the same time in different parts of India, in the context of debates within JSA about whether JSA should focus on national-level campaigns or state-level activities. In February 2000 Dr Sabu George, a nutritionist and health researcher, along with CEHAT and MASUM, had filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case in the Supreme Court on the issue of the use of the amniocentesis test to identify the sex of the foetus before birth in order to abort female foetuses (George and Dahiya 1998; George 2000; Rao 2001; Saravanan 2002). In 2001 the case was won and Sabu George initiated a campaign against female foeticide (Sarojini *et al.* 2006: 62-5; Gupte 2003; Srinivasan 2003: 99). While groups in a number of states (I was told of Haryana and Tamil Nadu) took up the issue within JSA, some groups in Maharashtra apparently argued that "female foeticide is not so important as violence against women" (Interview transcript) and led a JSA campaign on violence against women, an issue which a number of women's organisations and networks, including MAHILA and AIDWA (see Armstrong 2004), were working on at that time.[65] After collecting survey data on violence against women in Maharashtra, JAA succeeded in getting a government circular issued stating that violence against women must be documented at health centres as a cause of health problems by medical practitioners, rather than ignored. We can say that the use of survey data in such cases can be thought of as providing an effective 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985) – in Latour's language, an Archimedean lever to move government (Latour 1983, 1988) – because the survey form involves precisely the kind of knowledge the government relies upon to "see" (Scott 1998; Corbridge *et al.* 2005) and take action on behalf of its populations (Appadurai 2001; Nichter and Kendall 1991). Following the issuing of this circular, some organisations, including MAHILA, engaged in work of sensitising medical practitioners to violence against women (Notes from interview). MAHILA published a booklet on violence against women as a health issue under the name of *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (ref to booklet); because, as the coordinator of MAHILA explained, "we had the resources [to do so]" (Notes from interview).

After this campaign, Delhi Science Forum involved a small number of individuals within the leadership of JSA in writing a critique of the central government's National Health Policy in 2002 that was published under the title *Legitimising Privatisation* (ref). Several of my informants suggested that this critique had little impact on policymakers (Srinivasan 2003: 99), principally because the government was "rather right-wing" and because the critique was not taken up by the news media and as such was easy to dismiss (Interview transcript). Others felt it was important in enabling the pre-election dialogue JSA organised with political parties in 2004 (Narayan 2007: 3; see chapter 6).

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[64] Give a list of which languages they have been translated into.

[65] Although it is by no means clear that it is appropriate to do so, it is possible to see this 'struggle' between the female foeticide and violence against women agendas in terms of a struggle between the non-AIPSN faction and AIPSN factions in JSA (see chapter 3, and the next section of this chapter).

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While 'public transcripts' (Scott 1990; see chapter 1) of JSA in this period focus on outputs, such as the campaign on violence against women, and objects produced, such as *Legitimising Privatisation* (ref), JSA also produces what we might think of as partially-intended "secondary gains" (Parsons 1951) that we catch glimpses of through the hidden transcripts of JSA. In his analysis of deviant behaviour, Talcott Parsons uses the concept of 'secondary gain' to refer to the benefits the individual gains from the recognition of his or her behaviour as an illness, in particular the shifting of blame away from the individual (Conrad and Schneider 1995: 218). In relation to JSA, two secondary gains my informants referred to were their feeling of solidarity in encounters with JSA[66] and JSA's promotion of healthy dialogue and cross-fertilisation of ideas between factions and groupings who frequently fail to discuss their differences (see chapter 3). While Parsons sees secondary gains as benefits for which the deviant must pay the 'price' of recognising his/her behaviour as an undesirable state "to be recovered from as expeditiously as possible" (Parsons 1972: 108, cited in Conrad and Schneider 1995: 218), the only price associated with the secondary gains produced by JSA is the time and energy spent doing JSA work – a price of a different order to that described by Parsons. Having said that, a secondary gain which my informants might think of as having a more morally dubious character is that JSA provides a useful forum for networking; many of my informants told me stories of someone they knew who had secured a paid job partly as a result of contacts made through participation in voluntary work with JSA, and while some of them simply stated them as matters of fact, others coloured such stories with moral opprobrium [check word], implying that they put into question the good intentions of the individual involved (see chapter 4).

Quite apart from the view of voluntarism as a morally virtuous mode of action discussed in chapter 4, these secondary gains provide a legitimation of why the network form of JSA is socially beneficial, since all of them can be seen as products of that form. Although many NGOs pride themselves on their 'democratic' mode of functioning and the purity of their motives, their organisational form exerts an unavoidable influence on these aspects of their existence. Many NGOs are set up by charismatic individuals with a very strong sense of their own politics and ideology, what they want to do, and how they intend to do it. To make it happen, these individuals register an NGO and employ staff (chapter 7 tells the story of how SATHI emerged in this way). The staff they employ may or may not share the ideology of the individuals who created the organisation. In this sense the organisation is similar to a network like JSA: actors considering their membership identify what they can agree on, and if this is enough to justify them being part of the collective, they remain part of it; if not, they leave – "exit", in Hirschman's (1970) conceptual scheme (see Mitlin and Bebbington 2006: 8). But one key difference between an NGO and a network is that one of the incentives for an individual to continue to work for their NGO is that they are paid to do so. Although this difference should not be overstated (as we know that JSA work can lead to paid employment), in determining whether the individual stays or goes this financial incentive operates alongside the individual's assessment of the 'fit' between his or her ideology and that of the organisation. Michel de Certeau's (1997) point was that this ideological fit is never exact, and that while it may be possible for the individual to demand change within the organisation so that it might better fit his or her ideology – "speech" in de Certeau's scheme, "voice" in Hirschman's (1970) – the extent to which it is possible for the individual to articulate such demands depends on the position of the individual within the

[66] As one put it, "an important role of JSA is to energise people, to help stop them getting depressed" (Notes from interview).

organisation. To the extent that the individual is not in a strong enough position to articulate such demands s/he may have to simply 'grin and bear it' if s/he needs the money.

A number of my friends working in junior positions in NGOs in Pune articulated their experience in these terms. One told me about a meeting in the office of the NGO for which she worked in which a visitor from a *sanghatna* had made certain critical points about the NGO. She explained that while she agreed with many of the points made by the visitor, she could not have said those things herself because she was an employee; "the way I see it," she said, "I am paid to do this job so I do it honestly and don't let my ideology get in the way, because I need this job because I need to support my mother". She explained that if she could find voluntary work matching her ideology she would take it up and reduce her hours of work at the NGO (Fieldnotes).

Despite the achievements of JAA as a network and the benefits of the network form, the limits of the network form are also evident. Parasitic voluntarism is, by nature, a marginal activity, achieving incremental and often almost invisible gains which leave its practitioners wondering if their actions are in fact making any difference at all. A big, highly visible campaign requires more time, energy, coordination and resources – and, as a result, greater institutionalisation of the collective and a move away from the network form towards being more like an organisation. Continuing the focus on Maharashtra, the next section looks at a moment in JSA's history when this trade-off was made.

2. JSA as organisation

The origins of the JSA's Right to Health Care (RTHC) campaign can be traced to a seminar at the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad in January 2003. In this seminar, members of SATHI and CEHAT made presentations that outlined the contours of a rights-based approach to health and called for a campaign on right to health care.[67] At the heart of the campaign that developed over the next two years was a collaboration between JSA and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), a quasi-governmental body with the power to draw up lists of recommendations and summon state officials on a yearly basis to report what actions they have taken in relation to these recommendations. The campaign was structured around a set of public hearings across India, in which individual testimonies of 'denial of health care' (collected by JSA member organisations) were presented to the NHRC, and a response was demanded from senior government health officials (Health Secretary or Director of Health Services at state-level, the Union Minister and Union Secretary for Health and Family Welfare at national-level).[68] Cases presented in the hearings were collected by JSA member organisations using a set of guidelines and protocols designed by SATHI (JSA and CEHAT 2004). After a final National Public Hearing in Delhi in December 2004 that synthesised the findings of the other public hearings, a National Action Plan was drawn

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[67] The content of this seminar can be found in CEHAT (2003) and at http://www.cehat.org/rthc/rthbackgroundpapers.html. Two papers from this book are reproduced in the MFC Bulletin 308, December 2004-January 2005, "Legal Position On Right to Health Care" (pages 11-14) "Core Content of the Right to Health Care" (page 15), in addition to a position paper by Anant Phadke "The Rights Based Framework: Which Way To Go?" (pages 8-10). See http://www.mfcindia.org/mfcpdfs/MFC308.pdf

[68] For the National Human Rights Commission's take on it all, see their Annual Report for 2004-2005 (NHRC n.d., c. 2006: 102-4, 200, 225-255).

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up, and the yearly review meetings which took place from 2005 onwards were used by JSA as a way of taking up a variety of issues with the government.

The RTHC campaign can be seen as initiating a meaningful, critical engagement between JSA and government: 'meaningful' in the sense that the presence of the NHRC forced the government to respond to JSA in some manner, 'critical' in the sense that JSA adopted the position of a human rights watchdog, positioning itself 'outside' the field of healthcare provision and protesting at what was taking place within. As Dr Ameya explained, it was only because the campaign had an official association with the NHRC that the government took notice of JSA; "otherwise they would like to ignore you, they won't respond to your letters at all" (Interview transcript). The campaign suddenly made JSA visible to the state in a way that it had not been before, and was taken up enthusiastically by JSA members across the country who had been inactive in JSA since 2000; as one of my informants put it, the campaign had "a momentum that has rebuilt and strengthened JSA in different states" (Interview transcript). Dr Ramanathan described this shift of gears as the result of a conscious decision by the campaign's initiators, who felt that JSA faced a choice between taking up 'health as a human right' as a national campaign that would become "symbolic of the PHM" or continuing "with promoting these books [from the campaign in 2000] and evolving our own state-level [activities]" (Interview transcript).

However, others suggested to me that while the campaign rejuvenated JSA, it did so by transforming JSA, modifying its essence by moving it away from the network form and institutionalising it. To begin with, the campaign placed SATHI at the centre of JSA where previously JSA had appeared to be leaderless (at least since Dr Lakshmanan's leadership of the campaign in 2000). SATHI now appeared as a *de facto* leader of JSA, mainly because of the conditions that working with NHRC imposed on JSA. The NHRC wanted a set of activities across the country that would meet a tight set of deadlines, and to achieve this the JSA set up a Secretariat, comprising two individuals whose sole, paid work was to coordinate the campaign and ensure that other members of JSA, engaging in the campaign in a voluntary capacity and 'around' their day-to-day paid work, managed to meet the deadlines. These two individuals were junior office staff in the SATHI office in Pune. They were the only formally paid members of JSA, paid by SATHI as part of SATHI's contribution to JSA; "you could call it part of our organisational voluntarism" (Dr Sudhir, Fieldnotes). In addition, the campaign meant that for the first time money specifically earmarked for JSA activities came into circulation. This money came from NHRC for organising the regional public hearings. As JSA was not a registered organisation the money came to SATHI. Endowed with inertia by its MoU with the NHRC and the responsibilities, commitments and deadlines this entailed, JSA became more like an organisation.

Many of those who drew my attention to these changes were critical of them, feeling that something had been lost. Here it is productive to explore the nuances in their narratives of how this happened, keeping in mind the argument made in chapter 3 that narratives must be read 'against' the counter-narratives with which they are in conversation.

Early in my fieldwork I attended a public lecture in Pune on the Nuclear Deal between India and the US, an issue which was at that time front-page news because the Left Front threatened to withdraw their support from the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) central

government if they signed the deal.[69] Without having arranged to do so, I met a senior staff member of SATHI there, and sat beside him in the audience. He recognised a woman sitting further along our row of seats, said hello to her and introduced me as someone researching JSA and her as the coordinator of MAHILA. In a loud voice that she could hear, he told me, "You should talk to her about JSA." She grimaced, half-jokingly. I interviewed her and another member of her team in MAHILA's office a couple of weeks later. They explained that while MAHILA had been very active in the early years of JSA, they had stopped attending JAA meetings because they did not like what JAA had become under the leadership of SATHI.

In their narrative, JAA went through three phases associated with changes in leadership. It was the leadership in 2000 – Lakshmanan and AIPSN/BGVS – which made it something special, giving the campaign a "movement kind of feel, a left feel, the radical flavour that we went to Dhaka with" (Notes from interview). In 2000 BGVS led the campaign in Maharashtra, but after 2000 BGVS reduced their involvement and a number of rights-based NGOs – including MAHILA and SATHI – took the initiative. MAHILA tried to keep BGVS and the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) in JAA on the basis that these large, membership-based organisations were capable of taking forward the radical agenda of 'health for all' adopted in the campaign in 2000, whereas NGOs with small, professional teams of staff were only capable of playing a supporting role. These efforts were to no avail – both BGVS and CHAI withdrew from JAA as its activities became "a centrally-controlled process where the organisations in the field are just automatons doing surveys for SATHI to collate"; as one of MAHILA's senior staff exclaimed, "you can't expect the mass-based organisations to just go and fill out a form!" (Notes from interview). As BGVS departed, the difference between their leadership and the emerging leadership of SATHI was sorely felt. Particularly problematic was the delegation of gendered health issues to women's organisations and the "incredibly frustrating" style of JAA meetings, "where people travel across the whole state for a meeting and then don't get a chance to say a word until the end, when they're told 'Oh, why didn't you talk, say something'" (Notes from interview).

Despite these concerns, MAHILA remained involved in certain JAA activities, in particular the violence against women campaign, "until the national RTHC campaign, when the rights agenda got bulldozed in with no space for discussion" (Notes from interview). After explaining to SATHI why they felt this was the wrong direction in which to go and receiving what they deemed to be an unsatisfactory response, MAHILA stopped attending JAA meetings and applied their energies elsewhere. At this point SATHI became *de facto* leader of JAA and, MAHILA felt, JAA became an NGO project. "We would have a JAA meeting and 4 people would turn up from SATHI, while one person turns up from each of the other organisations involved. Why? Why do they need 4? Because SATHI has money for the campaign as a project" (Notes from interview). Immediately the motives of those 4 people come into question. Are they at the meeting because they think it is important or because they are paid to be there? How can they earn from it, when everyone else contributes time to the campaign voluntarily in addition to the work for which they are paid? "It was our campaign, now it's their project" (Notes from interview).

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[69] The topic of the lecture is not insignificant, as it is an issue on which the party and non-party left took a common stance in the period I was doing my research. The lecture was given by ???, and organised by Lokayat (also significant). It took place in Dnyaneshwar Hall, near Gokhale Institute; i.e. in old Pune. Also significant.

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A key question raised by this narrative is why BGVS reduced their involvement in JAA, and although BGVS activists I spoke to concurred with MAHILA that one reason was the direction JAA activities took, they also identified other, very different reason: health was only one of the focus areas of BGVS, and the organisational structure of BGVS meant it became necessary for BGVS to turn its attention to its other focus areas. BGVS Maharashtra, like many other organisations under the AIPSN umbrella, does not employ "a sustained workforce based upon salary structure" (Interview transcript) and relies instead on the efforts of a small number of full-time activists (2 in Maharashtra) and a large number of volunteers, the majority of whom are either lower middle-class professionals (mostly working outside the NGO sector) or villagers who make small contributions to the work of the organisation on an ad hoc basis. AIPSN/BGVS activists argue that their approach to funding marks them out as different to NGOs:

> In India, normally the context in which we use [the term] 'NGOs' is that they are small organisations, project-based, and the work is based on funding support that they receive from donor organisations. Whereas most of our work is not project-based, it's volunteer-based, so the kind of work we do is not determined by the projects that we take up that we are able to source, but what we think we should be doing. So in that sense we would like to call ourselves a movement rather than an NGO, which does not mean that I'm using the word NGO in any pejorative sense, but just to define how it is. (Interview transcript)

The mode of functioning of AIPSN/BGVS has different strengths and weaknesses to that of an NGO. AIPSN/BGVS has a huge number of members who contribute their time to its work – several activists gave me the figure of 600 000 across the country – and in the campaign in 2000 it was these members who made possible "district-level mobilisation across the country" (Interview transcript). In contrast, NGOs could at best play a supporting role of mobilisation in the small number of villages and districts in which they had projects. As Lakshmanan put it, AIPSN/BGVS "are good in mobilising for an event. But after that people have to rest because you have put [in] all your resources and now you have to refresh yourself, all your leave has been exhausted" (Interview transcript). In contrast, a rights-based NGO has the infrastructure to sustain *continuous* engagement with the grassroots through a combination of funded project work and parasitic voluntarism such as that which characterised the activities of JAA in 2001 and 2002. After 2000, many in AIPSN/BGVS took the position that "we've spent time on health, now we need to focus on other things" (Interview transcript); in that context, BGVS activists in Maharashtra put their energy into their organisation's other focus areas and effectively dropped out of JAA.

While scholarly accounts of BGVS (Jenkins 2010; Saldanha date?) support this analysis,[70] senior staff of rights-based NGO members of JAA disagreed with this analysis

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[70] Interestingly, none of my informants mentioned to me something that might be considered an additional reason the BGVS may have reduced their involvement after 2000: this period was a time of financial hardship and difficult political conditions for the BGVS. The BGVS Annual Report for 2003-4 notes that "It is often said that true strength becomes evident during times of adversity, and this is what we could say about our organisation for the phase between 1999-2003, and in particular between 2002 and 2003. With literally no financial support at the central level, our organisation not only survived but grew in strength, as was evident from the Peace, Unity and Sovereignty Jatha of September/October 2003. That the organisation had deep roots in the community and was not a top-down organisation was evident from the way the state units responded during this phase. Unlike the heydays of the literacy campaigns when the fragile state units looked up for support, the Peace, Unity and Sovereignty Jatha not only demonstrated the resource strength of the organisation, but also our ability to adapt our agenda to a particular time, since this Jatha was clearly a political response to the twin challenges of neo-liberalism and fundamentalism." (BGVS, n.d.: 1). This document was photocopied by me in Denzil's office. One page 6 it indicates that the reason financial support from the central level began to dry up from 1999 was that work with the National Literacy Mission (NLM) was coming to an end (page 7 says "BGVS's origin is obviously linked to the

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when I suggested it to them. They downplayed the significance of BGVS within JSA with statements like "BGVS is only one group within JSA" (Fieldnotes), and rejected the distinction between BGVS and their own organisations by stating that "BGVS is an NGO" (Transcript of focus group discussion). Unlike MAHILA, their narratives of JAA drew no distinction between the "movement kind of feel" of 2000 and the activities of 2001 and 2002, although they acknowledged that the involvement of all organisations within JAA varies according to their other commitments. Thus while the gist of MAHILA's narrative is that "after BGVS left it wasn't the same", the narrative of other NGOs is "the BGVS are not of particular significance in JAA, and never have been." While senior staff in SATHI acknowledged that they had become the *de facto* leaders of JAA, their explanation for this was that an attempt had been made to move from a Pune-based collective leadership to a Maharashtra-based collective leadership to overcome the network's 'Pune-centrism', and that this attempt had failed "partly because of logistical reasons" (Interview transcript). Senior staff in MAHILA scoffed at this: "you can't just explain the absence of organisations by distance; if they're not turning up it shows they're not into it, that it's not their thing and that they don't think the likely outputs are worth their energies" (Notes from interview).

As argued in chapter 3, these narratives should not be interpreted as statements of fact expressed to a neutral observer, but as interventions in a live set of power relations. Each narrator strives to convince his/her audience that his/her narrative deserves more credence than the others in order to enrol supporters for his/her position. In the process, ideology, organisational structure and logistics are mobilised to 'clothe' changes in relationships that often have much more to do with a 'macro' politics of factions and affiliations on the one hand, and 'micro' personal differences and personality clashes on the other.

The narratives presented in this section construct a dividing line between AIPSN and non-AIPSN factions in JSA, marked by beliefs each group has about how the other group is different to them. While the narratives emphasise differences between organisational forms and the role of particular organisations in JAA, beneath such 'visible' beliefs lurk more hidden beliefs about the affiliation and sympathies of the other group. In particular, many in the non-AIPSN faction believe that AIPSN/BGVS is a front organisation of the mainstream left parties in India, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM). This belief is accurate insofar as many individuals within the leadership of AIPSN/BGVS are party members and articulate the party line in discussions of certain political issues; it is inaccurate insofar as many others within AIPSN/BGVS have no connection with these parties. The 'opposite number' of this belief is the belief, held by many in the AIPSN faction, that many of the senior staff of the rights-based NGOs leaders adhere to what we might call a 'modified Lokayan narrative' (see chapter 2) that sees established political parties as an obstacle rather than vehicle for social change, and sympathises with the resurgent Naxalite movement in India. During my fieldwork, some justification for these beliefs became visible to me in discussions of ongoing struggles in Nandigram and Singur, in which some members of the non-AIPSN faction directed me to www.sanhati.com[71] and some members of the

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literacy campaigns and the NLM. With the decline and retreat of NLM, particularly since 1999, an adverse impact on the organisation should have been normal"). Elsewhere I have documents that indicate that the BJP (leading the central government NDA coalition that was in power 1998 [1999?]-2004) was working hard to destroy the BGVS during this period.

[71] A website featuring reports that are highly critical of the CPM-led West Bengal government's role in the struggle and rather less critical of those on the other side.

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AIPSN faction directed me to CPM reports on these struggles. At the second National Health Assembly, which took place in February 2007 shortly before I went to India, some members of the non-AIPSN faction demanded that JSA should 'take a position' on Nandigram, against the actions of the CPM-led state government of West Bengal. Certain BGVS leaders stated that if JSA took this position, BGVS would withdraw from JSA; the non-AIPSN faction backed down, and a number of them adopted a 'position' on Nandigram as individuals rather than as JSA.

It does not make sense to imagine a one-way causal relation between certain beliefs and practices on the one hand and the division between these factions on the other (Latour 2005: 59). Rather, the division is reproduced through particular beliefs and practices, within the context of a struggle for dominance, but its origins predate particular beliefs and practices, and lie in the intertwined histories of organisations and individuals. One way of understanding the politics of JAA in Maharashtra is by tracing it from the moment, many years before the formation of JSA, in which three prominent Pune-based activists working together in the science movement fell out with each other. All three followed a leftist ideology, but two of them were linked to CPM while the third was linked to Shramik Mukti Dal (SMD), a small political party associated with a *sanghatna* in Kolhapur district. The first worked as a full-timer with CPM in Nandurbar district and is today a significant figure in the party in Maharashtra, the second, Datta Desai, worked with BGVS as a full-timer and is today one of its leaders in Maharashtra, and the third, Dr Ameya, initially worked as a full-timer with SMD and Lok Vigyan Sanghatna (Marathi: People's Science Movement), a science movement organisation with no connection to CPM or BGVS, and later worked with the health NGOs FRCH and CEHAT before forming SATHI in 1997. In 2000 MAHILA was formed by a close friend of Datta Desai's wife Vinaya, leader of BGVS Maharashtra; both MAHILA's coordinator and Vinaya had previously worked together in AIDWA, a network of women's organisations linked to CPM (Calman 1989; Armstrong 2004).[72]

Is it this history of association that animates the different narratives? Partly. All the narrators have made names for themselves within the field of social action in Maharashtra, and these are at stake in the struggle between the narratives. Nevertheless it is hard to believe that this concern alone could evoke the passionate defences of a position displayed by senior staff of MAHILA and rights-based NGO members of JAA. What seems far more plausible is that both these groups mobilise their narratives in the struggle for dominance within the field of social action because there are material gains at stake. In chapter 6 I argue that at the time of my fieldwork (2007-9) the AIPSN and non-AIPSN factions were engaged in a struggle over the future of JSA at the national-level because the leaders of both could see how the JSA network could play a very useful supporting role in their own agendas. In this chapter I have described how SATHI won the struggle over the future of JAA partly because BGVS had no interest in contesting the leadership, but more importantly because SATHI's position became far stronger than any possible contender when they launched the Right to Health Care campaign in 2003. Rather than signifying the end of *all* struggle, however, it is still worthwhile for MAHILA to outline a passionate critique of JAA when speaking to an anthropologist in 2007 because SATHI's victory in JAA was a victory on only one battlefield in a warzone encompassing the whole of the field of social action.

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[72] The leader of BGVS in Maharashtra when I did my fieldwork was Datta's wife, Vinaya, who is also ex-AIDWA. At national level, Sundar is Vice-President of BGVS, and his wife leads AIDWA.

One question raised by MAHILA's narrative of a 'fall from grace' is: "What if BGVS *had* remained involved in JAA?" While MAHILA feel BGVS in Maharashtra was better able to manage the diverse membership of JAA than SATHI, many in the non-AIPSN faction of JSA feel that in state chapters where AIPSN/BGVS has remained involved in JSA, non-AIPSN groups have been excluded. One senior staff member of a rights-based NGO explained this by suggesting that although the national leaders of AIPSN/BGVS believed JSA should be an inclusive network, AIPSN/BGVS cadres were sometimes "unclear that they were supposed to work actively with the Dr Sudhirs and the Dr Ameyas of the world" and saw JSA as one of AIPSN/BGVS's campaign platforms rather than as a campaign platform with which AIPSN/BGVS were involved (Interview transcript). Against this interpretation, the analysis in this chapter suggests that perhaps it really is the differences in organisational structure between BGVS and rights-based NGOs that makes it difficult for them to work together, because these differences mean they have different strengths and weaknesses. While JAA under the leadership of BGVS has a "movement kind of feel", mobilising large numbers of people for an event and enabling the 'capture of speech' (de Certeau 1997), its existence is performative – when the event is over, JAA disappears. In contrast, SATHI brought to JAA (and JSA) a certain inertia that made the network more visible, its demands more audible, even as it also brought in hierarchy, narrowness of scope, and other aspects of institutionalisation that made it harder – or impossible – for certain voices to be heard.

3. JSA as performance

The first two sections of this chapter contrasted the opportunities offered and constraints posed to JSA by the network form and by institutionalisation through an examination of different moments in the history of JSA in Maharashtra. This third section argues that illuminating though this contrast is, it does not exhaust the range of ways in which JSA works, and that we can think of a third important way in which JSA works in terms of performance. By 'performance' I refer to the way in which JSA members put on or take off their JSA identity as if it were a 'hat'. While this characteristic of JSA can be understood as an aspect of the network form, I argue that conceptualising any of what goes on in the Indian field of social action as 'organisations' or 'networks' blinds us to the way in which the collectives in this field are shaped by a community of individuals engaged in performing different official/unofficial, formal/informal, legal/grey area ways of identifying themselves and their activities in order to do the different types of things they want to do within the laws and social norms that govern this field.

An article by Aradhana Sharma (2006) anticipates certain aspects of my argument here. Sharma analyses Mahila Samakhya (MS), a women's 'empowerment' programme initiated by the Government of India which from the state-level down is, in the words of one of its administrators, an "autonomous organisation" – a hybrid institution which "[i]n the world of development agencies...would be considered a government-organised NGO (GONGO)" (2006: 61). MS representatives shift back and forth between the programme's GO and NGO labels as needs dictate, making "very good use of both", by, for example keeping two letterheads for use in different situations (2006: 70). While the government label can be used to perform statist authority, the NGO label serves to provide legitimacy or "justify MS's lack of resources" (2006: 71). However, MS representatives were not the only ones making use of this ambiguity; in particular, government officials positioned MS workers as NGO employees "when it came to determining compensation and benefits" and as government functionaries in situations in

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which the NGO label "could prove problematic, especially in matters relating to anti-state mobilisations" (2006: 72).

JSA is made up of individuals with multiple identities who must continuously make choices about how to identify themselves and their activities. Chapter 3 argued that in the campaign in 2000 it was decided that individuals should identify themselves according to their membership of one of the 18 national networks, for reasons of political expediency. Turning to the question of how individuals identify their activities, we can note that there are many alternative campaign platforms for issues to do with women's health, and that the JSA's violence against women campaign could have been taken up by one of these rather than by JSA. One possible reason this campaign and other gendered health issues might have been taken through JSA rather than through another collective is the expectation that organisations with broader agendas than gender might have got involved, an expectation that, from MAHILA's perspective, JAA failed to meet (see the discussion in the previous section).

While we might expect that individuals will not always agree among themselves about which collective should take up a particular campaign or issue, what is perhaps more surprising is that individuals also disagree *afterwards* about which collective *did* take up a particular campaign or issue. In Maharashtra, some of my informants considered the amendment of the Bombay Nursing Home Regulation Act (BNHRA) – a step towards the regulation of private medical clinics – the work of one individual (X), others thought it was the work of one organisation (CEHAT), while still others thought of it as a JSA activity (principally JAA). Where there is confusion about a particular activity such as BNHRA, part of the problem is that it may move between different fora within its lifespan. The BNHRA started as a consultancy put out by the government and the World Bank, that was carried out by X as an employee of CEHAT. This was challenged by Y, a practicing doctor who engaged with activist campaigns on a voluntary basis; Y thought it should have been done by civil society working together. Later, the work done by X was followed up by JAA, with CEHAT playing a leading role in this. In this case, BNHRA moves between fora because it is attached to a particular individual (X) until a certain point in the process when that individual goes to Delhi to pursue something different but similar, and those in Maharashtra follow it up.

We can interpret these conflicting narratives in terms of individuals and groups keen to retrospectively claim this activity as their own achievement (chapter 3 presents a similar argument), but there is more to it than this. At different stages in the process of moving the BNHRA forward, it suits or doesn't suit the needs of different actors to associate the BNHRA with JSA or other collectives. At the time Y made his criticism of how CEHAT had taken the project forward, these actors differed in their view of which actors should have been involved with it. Later, X was keen to distance himself from both CEHAT and JSA, on the basis that he had reservations with the way they had taken the project forward locally after his move to Delhi (by teaming up with JSA Gujarat and the Gujarat Health Commissioner to work on a Gujarat Public Health Act (GPHA)), having himself taken the project forward in Delhi (by working with WHO-SEARO (World Health Organisation-South East Asian Regional Organisation) to draft a national Clinical Establishments Bill).[73] This story illustrates how the strategic value of performing JSA as

[73] This bill was passed by the Lok Sabha at the end of June 2010 and sparked off mass protests by doctors arguing that small to medium-sized private clinics would face closure and that therefore the bill was in the interests of the large corporate hospitals. This seems likely given that the regulatory body will probably be corrupt and paid by the large corporate hospitals to shut down their smaller and weaker rivals.

an identity is relative rather than fixed. For X, JSA always remains one of the identities he can choose to perform, but the strategic value of performing it varies on the basis of changes in his situation (in particular, as he moves from CEHAT to WHO-SEARO) and changes in JSA's situation (in particular, as JSA turns its focus from BNHRA to GPHA).

What is perhaps most significant about JSA as an identity that can be performed is that as an identity it is not singular but, like MS, contains a certain ambiguity that can be utilised in different situations to achieve different effects. While Sharma emphasises MS's strategic uses of the differences between how governmental and nongovernmental labels are perceived, JSA thrives on its ambiguous relation to the distinction between collectives that are seen as *critical* of government and those that are seen as anti-government (although this ambiguity has also created significant problems for JSA, which are discussed in chapter 6). On the one hand, for the NGO professionals who were the focus of the analysis in chapter 4 their voluntarism with *Jan Arogya Abhiyan/Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* can be performed as an identity that is far more radical than their identity as a salaried employee of a rights-based NGO. Here the word "*abhiyan*" is key, containing within itself a multiplicity of meanings. While some JSA NCC members translate it as "movement" and this is how it is presented in JSA literature (refs), one JSA NCC member from the AIPSN faction insisted that when a name for JSA had been chosen "*abhiyan*" had very consciously been selected in preference to "*andolan*", on the understanding that "*abhiyan*" means a "campaign" and "*andolan*" means a "movement":

> [*Abhiyan*] doesn't mean movement. There was a time when we were thinking of calling it *Jan Swasthya Andolan*, and we shifted off and said *Abhiyan* because many people [in JSA] are not [from the] people's movements – [they] would like to be, would like to be – but are not. We don't exist on people's support, we very often exist on donor support. And some of the organisations have no mass-membership, completely donor support. A *lot* of donor funding, and to call them people's organisations is just not acceptable. That creates a very unreal expectation of JSA. JSA is a number of pro-people organisations and non-governmental organisations. It has some people's organisations but there are very few. That's what we all want to be, but we can't quite give up our middle-class salaries and go into the village. (Interview transcript)

On the other hand, while NGO professionals can perform JSA as an identity that is far more radical than their NGO professional identity, for *sanghatna* (Marathi: people's organisation, people's movement) activists, *Jan Arogya Abhiyan/Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* offers them an identity that is useful because it is far *less* radical than their *sanghatna* identity, partly as a result of popular perceptions of "*arogya/swasthya*" (Marathi/Hindi: health). Kamlatai[74] worked as a teacher but had been to medical school and brought this background into her voluntary work with *sanghatnas* in rural Maharashtra. She frequently attended JAA meetings as a representative of the *sanghatna* with whom she had worked for many years. When I interviewed her in her house in Pune, she explained that when she interacted with government officials while in the villages, she frequently used her JSA label rather than her *sanghatna* label "because usually the government's attitude is, 'If he's an activist of the people's movement, anyway he's going to be anti-government,' and because I say I'm from a biomedical background, and a JSA representative, their attitude changes to some extent, they're more willing to listen" (Interview transcript). At work here is the perceived technical, politically-neutral expertise of biomedicine (Adams 1998), in stark contrast to the overtly political nature of the *sanghatna*. More than that, however, Kamlatai suggested that some government officials genuinely want to help but, not wanting to be seen giving in to the demands of a *sanghatna*, "find it convenient to help a *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* representative, because it

[74] Name changed.

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doesn't affect their being a government officer adversely" (Interview transcript). In cases where a local official remains intransigent [check], Kamlatai makes use of the perception that JSA might have political connections that might be brought to bear directly on that official: "I tell them, 'Okay, you're not going to respond to me? In a week [...] I'll straight away go to talk to Dr Doke [Director of Health Services in Maharashtra] through the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan*,' so they prefer to at least pretend to do something" (Interview transcript). This is possible, Kamlatai claims, largely because of the Right to Health Care campaign, which made JSA visible through government circulars issued by Dr Doke which stated that local government officers must attend the public hearing held at *taluka* (sub-district) level; as a result, "they cannot say that they don't know about *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan*" (Interview transcript).

As with David Kennedy's (2004) auto-ethnography of a human rights mission to a prison in Uruguay, in Kamlatai's narrative identities are seen as things to be put on and discarded as if they were 'hats' or some other item of clothing. They are tools to be deployed strategically by the activist, but more than that, they are roles that must be performed in order to get past institutional gatekeepers. The ambiguities of a reality in which each of us has a number of identities is not something that has to be hidden so much as managed; in a single conversation with a prison warden Kennedy finds it is sometimes necessary to be a dispassionate lawyer, sometimes a human (a husband, perhaps, or some other 'personal' identity rather than a professional one – described succinctly by Kennedy as relations with a "personal and human dimension" (2004: 62)), sometimes a representative of one's sponsor institution, and it is essential that each of these identities is pulled out at the appropriate time.

While it is illuminating to examine how the management of identities can mean victory or defeat in a specific instance, it is also vital to take account of how the choice of one identity over another contributes to the entrenchment of one group rather than another (Latour 2005: 54), precisely because "[i]t is always by comparison with other *competing* ties that any tie is emphasised" (Latour 2005: 32, my emphasis). When they talked to me, many of my informants made references to stances on certain issues that had been adopted by other actors within JSA. When they did so, they often named organisations and states rather than individuals, making statements like "people in SATHI think this" or "Maharashtra said 'no, female foeticide is not as important as violence against women'". In such statements, the names of organisations and states are being used as shorthand that the speaker assumes his or her audience understands – and the audience probably *would* understand that 'what people in SATHI think' means 'what Dr Ameya and Dr Sudhir think', and that 'what Maharashtra said' means 'what was said by senior staff of JAA member organisations working on the issue of violence against women such as MAHILA'.

To take the first example, it is likely that before taking a position on an issue, Dr Ameya and Dr Sudhir will discuss the issue with other people, including rank-and-file staff members in SATHI. This is perhaps *more* likely in SATHI than in many other NGOs, as SATHI has a reputation among the community of junior staff members of NGOs in Pune as an organisation with an unusually democratic and 'inclusive' mode of functioning. In a casual conversation while shopping for groceries, one junior NGO worker explained to me that this was unusual because "the sort of work these people go into when they enter the NGO sector is usually administrative work, getting a project working but not asking or being given space to discuss the theory, the whys and wherefores of the project" (Fieldnotes). However, even in SATHI the pressures of the organisational form discussed

in the first section of this chapter mean that there will always be some critical points junior staff of the organisation feel hesitant to express to the organisation's coordinators because they are their employers, and some employees who feel the 'fit' between their ideology and that of the organisation is unsatisfactory but something they must 'grin and bear' because they need the money. Moreover, even if SATHI debates an issue before taking a position as an organisation, the understanding is that once made, the decision will be owned by (i.e. attributed to) Dr Ameya and Dr Sudhir.

Consequently, the shorthand of "people in SATHI think this" leaves a lot unsaid, and as such has a lot of potential to mislead an outsider trying to quickly grasp the dynamics of relationships in the Indian field of social action; when used in conversation with outsiders, this shorthand does violence to those in SATHI who may *not* think this and are not in a position to articulate what they *do* think. While this might lead us to the conclusion that using this convenient shorthand in conversation with outsiders is nothing more than an error easily rectified, in fact I would suggest that it is also *far more* than this. My informants' references to member organisations or state chapters of JSA in discussions of JSA might be understood as a performance of political representation: an enactment of the symbolic power of speaking into existence a group, a constituency, and positioning particular individuals as spokespersons of that constituency. As Bourdieu puts it, "If I, Pierre Bourdieu, a single and isolated individual, speak only for myself, say 'you must do this or that...', who will follow me? But if...I may appear as speaking 'in the name of the masses'...that changes everything" (Bourdieu 1991: 212).

Such performances can be extremely effective. Babu,[75] a senior figure in the NGO sector, told me of a consultation with WHO in Geneva in which he had caught the attention of all present by presenting himself as spokesperson for more than 200 Indian civil society organisations in a meeting where all other participants only represented their own organisation. He explained that at the time he was invited to participate in this consultation he had mobilised his substantial networks to arrange meetings with over 200 civil society organisations in four major Indian cities before flying to Geneva; this process was the basis for his claim. However, it is not difficult to deconstruct this claim by pointing out that in many of the organisations consulted the organisation's 'representative' was its coordinator and no one else in the organisation had been "given space to discuss the theory, the whys and wherefores". Claiming to be the spokesperson for 200 Indian NGO professionals would also have caught the attention of all present in Geneva, but it would not have had the same ring to it; it would not have caught their attention *so well*. This is at least partly because when WHO claims to have consulted 'civil society' it is susceptible to exactly the same critical questions as Babu himself has to face, namely: who or what is this 'civil society' that has been consulted? By what criteria have those consulted been selected? For whom do they speak, and on what basis? From WHO's perspective, the greater the size of the constituency to which Babu can lay claim, the better.

Such performances can also dismally fail. For all the stories like that of Babu, there are other stories of government officials listening politely to what a JAA delegation have to say and then doing nothing about it, walking out part-way through the meeting, or refusing to meet them in the first place (perhaps by cancelling the meeting last-minute due to 'urgent other business'). If such moments are, as JAA members would emphasise, partly a reflection of the imperviousness of government officials to the concerns of

[75] Name changed.

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citizens, they are probably also partly a reflection of those officials' perception that the representatives of organisations and networks facing them across the table "do not represent anyone but themselves" and that consequently "governmental representatives are no more accountable to them than to their other constituents" (Feher 2007: 15). Worse, government officials may dismiss entirely the views of NGO professionals who they see as mouthpieces of the foreign funding agencies who finance their work and, therefore, as entirely outside of their own constituency (Bano 2008: 103; see chapters 2 and 4).

In the contemporary era of "telecommunications metaphors" (Mertes 2004: 247), it is increasingly important that the politics of performance of political representation be taken into account in analyses of actors in the field of social action, particularly when such analyses attempt to examine very different collectives alongside each other. The contested nature of BGVS discussed in the second section of this chapter offers a pertinent case of why it is vital that the politics of these performances be taken into account. By claiming that "BGVS is only one group within JSA" and "BGVS is an NGO", senior staff of rights-based NGO members of JAA are attempting to present BGVS as equivalent to their own organisations, and the constituencies of BGVS spokespersons as equivalent to their own constituencies. If the BGVS account of how BGVS differs to NGOs is true, then these claims by senior staff of rights-based NGO members of JAA are acts that do violence to the massive membership of an organisation whose spokespersons have a far stronger basis for claiming to be representative of their members than these NGOs can claim in relation to their small number of staff, because BGVS's members are volunteers who do not work for the organisation for financial gain, and would leave the organisation if the gap between BGVS's ideology and their own became too great.

Conclusion

The analysis in the first two sections of this chapter suggests that although collectives that claim to be representative always do a kind of violence to those they claim to represent, some collectives do more violence than others. An NGO may do a greater violence to its junior staff than a voluntary network does to its members because the financial compulsion to remain in the organisation is absent in the network. But a network becomes more like an organisation when membership promises a visibility that may lead to paid work and funded projects as a secondary gain. When this happens much may be gained (for example, the weapons Kamlatai takes into her encounters with government representatives), but something is also lost. The capacity of network members to criticise stances taken by its convenors may become limited in much the same way as the capacity of junior staff to criticise their organisation's coordinator; "our campaign" becomes "their project". The moment in which speech was captured (de Certeau 1997) is over, and with 'voice' no longer an option, network members are left with the choice between 'exit' and 'loyalty' (Hirschman 1970). Some, like MAHILA, will choose the former. Many others choose the latter.

What the analysis of the third section of the chapter adds to our understanding of the field of social action is that the identities to which individuals have recourse are multiple and varied, and that while many members of JSA have proven adept at making strategic use of different 'hats' according to the dictates of the situation with which they are faced, sometimes they get caught in the process as if, like a spider, a sudden change in their immediate environment had trapped them in their own web. Chapter 6 develops this

argument through an analysis of one such moment of entrapment which threatened to break JSA during the period of my fieldwork.

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6. Engagements: Inside or outside when the government changes

Introduction

This chapter takes as its focus the relationships JSA has developed with other actors. Although previous chapters have indicated how ideas about JSA's relationship with 'the people' have influenced the voluntaristic form JSA has taken since 2000, during the period of my fieldwork deeply divisive debates about JSA's relationship with the state took centre-stage, at times threatening to split JSA. Jaya, a Delhi-based JSA member who represented FORCES in the NCC in 2000 and later represented the Right to Food campaign in the NCC, explained that from the outset JSA "has come up *vis-a-vis* the state, *vis-a-vis* rights upon the state, expectations from the state", as opposed to having a focus on health issues as "primarily a problem of people's thinking, lack of awareness and ignorance" (Interview transcript). Yet while this much is clear to those involved, JSA members do not agree on how JSA should engage with the state. I discussed this with Lakshmanan, the Vice-President of AIPSN, in his flat in Delhi. He told me "the central issue of the JSA is this issue of working with the government or working against the government," adding that "I have no problem with engaging with this problem but you have to know your position and be consistent with it" (Interview transcript).

We shall see in this chapter that it is the second of Lakshmanan's statements here that is most indicative of the problem JSA was facing during the period of my fieldwork. When the UPA central government came to power in 2004, JSA was thrown into an existential crisis, because while all members of JSA had been against the "rather right-wing" BJP-led NDA central government, BGVS/AIPSN wanted to work with the UPA and its Left Front supporters, the anti-CPM *sanghatnas* wanted to work against the UPA, and the rights-based NGOs found themselves trapped by the tensions between the contradictory imperatives of their parasitic voluntarism (chapter 4): their non-radical professional (paid) identity wanted to work with the UPA because the UPA was offering lots of opportunities to 'civil society' organisations, and their radical activist (voluntary) identity wanted to work against the UPA with the *sanghatnas*.

In this chapter I use the word '*position*' to refer to the stances taken by individuals on specific issues and questions of how they should act, in particular the question Lakshmanan raises here of whether JSA should work with or against the government. I use the word '*positioned*' to refer to the location of individuals, organisations and JSA in particular networks of relationships, i.e. not a fixed point but a point locked into certain relatively stable or unstable relationships with other points. The similarity of 'position' and 'positioned' as words and the difference in how I am using them may make the text confusing as both these words get used a lot, but my informants used the words in this way; I could use the word 'stance' instead of position, but none of my informants did so. These two concepts are crucial to my analysis, in which I argue that at the core of the problem of JSA's engagement with the state is the question of how an individual's position relates to how s/he is positioned. As Jaya put it, "if you are working within the government system you tend to see things differently; if you are located in a ground-level struggle like Narmada Bachao Andolan [Hindi: Save the Narmada Movement] your position would be very different from some of us who are not" (Interview transcript).

Chapter 5 drew in part on my informants' narratives of what JSA was, is or should be, and examined how the divergences between these narratives relate to the locations of their narrators. This chapter is organised in a similar fashion, this time focusing on how the positions on JSA's engagement with the state adopted by two individuals, Lakshmanan and Sudhir, relate to how those individuals are positioned. The chapter argues that in order to understand these relations it is useful to follow Latour in thinking of an actor – such as Lakshmanan or Sudhir – not as "a pure and unproblematic source of action" but as "the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it" (2005: 46). In his usage, Latour argues that the word actor "directs our attention to a complete dislocation of the action, warning us that it is not a coherent, controlled, well-rounded, and clean-edged affair" (2005: 46). Rather than getting mired in the sterile ground between the extremes of those who believe it is the individuals alone who act and those who believe action is entirely determined by social structures, Latour offers an approach to analysis that sees the actor's agency as being mediated by the unpredictable influences of other agencies. This approach captures the ways in which action is messy, ambiguous and contingent, and how different actors, positioned differently, face different exigencies of practice and different constraints on their decision-making.

The chapter's focus on positions invites speculation on the intentions of those making the decisions in question but, as argued in chapter 3, these remain unknown to us and thus beyond the scope of the analysis. In contrast, *the actors'* speculations on and claims about intentions have a significant influence on decision-making and narratives in the Indian field of social action, as argued in chapters 3 and 4. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, I draw on a distinction described by Bailey (1970) and Kennedy (2004) between decisions made on the basis of normative rules and decisions made on the basis of pragmatic rules. Normative rules are "the ideals and ends and standards which people set themselves in public affairs" (Bailey 1970: 5), what Kennedy calls "virtue, damn the consequences" (Kennedy 2004: 337). Pragmatic rules are how people "set about winning" (Bailey 1970: 5), the "pragmatic weighing and balancing of consequences necessary for responsible practical governance" (Kennedy 2004: 337). Although I draw on this distinction I trouble these two categories, as normative rules can be inspirational, ex post facto, or can depend on the audience (different audiences will be sympathetic to different ex post facto rationalisations of an action), whereas pragmatic rules, the exigencies of practice, are more locked into specific situations, even if there is always still some room for manoeuvre and choice. I suggest that these categories can be useful explanatory devices so long as we remain conscious of the fact that how people make decisions and how they talk about them are different things.

The first section of the chapter returns to the Right to Health Care campaign discussed in chapter 5, focusing on how the campaign shaped JSA's relationships with other actors in order to describe the terrain on which the debates over JSA's engagement with the state took place. The second section...

1. The Right to Healthcare Campaign

Let us start with the moment in late 1994 or early 1995 when Pradip Prabhu met Dr Sudhir, a young doctor who had completed his MD from Delhi in 1988 and gone into medical practice as a consultant in a private hospital in Kanpur, his hometown. Pradip was a full-time activist with Kashtakari Sanghatna (Marathi: Toilers' Union), a mass-based organisation working with adivasi (tribal) villagers in Thane district in Maharashtra. Formed by Pradip and a number of other adivasi and non-adivasi activists

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in 1978, Kashtakari Sanghatna took up specific issues of significance to this community, in particular access to land and forest, by mobilising the adivasis against the non-adivasi landlords, moneylenders, forest officials and government officials who exploited and oppressed them. The founder-activists of Kashtakari Sanghatna aimed to facilitate and support people's efforts and actions for empowerment, and attempted "to develop a movement based on decentralised, democratic process of debate and consensus-building on 'traditional' adivasi values of co-operation, equality and solidarity" (Mehta 1999: 148). Sudhir was visiting social movements in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and having ongoing discussions with Dr Ameya. The purpose of these visits and the topic of his discussions with Dr Ameya was an exploration of the question of how health can become the issue of a social movement. Their starting premise was that while health in itself is unlikely to become an issue around which people get organised because it is not a matter of everyday concern (see chapter 7), where people are already organised on issues that *are* of everyday concern, such as access to land and forest, with appropriate inputs they can also get organised around health. Sudhir visited the Kashtakari Sanghatna area, and in mid-1995 shifted to Maharashtra and began work with Kashtakari Sanghatna.

Sudhir and Dr Ameya initiated what they named the arogyasathi (Marathi: health-companion) programme with Kashtakari Sanghatna, training adivasi women as politically-conscious community health workers who would provide basic healthcare but also mobilise the villagers to demand government health workers provide the healthcare they are supposed to provide. In 1998 Sudhir and Ameya formed SATHI in order for the programme to expand and begin work with other mass-based organisations. This story is discussed in more detail in chapter 7 of my thesis; I summarise it here is to draw attention to the background of Sudhir, who was launched into the leadership of JSA at the start of 2003 when SATHI and CEHAT initiated the Right to Health Care campaign, SATHI agreed to host the National Secretariat of JSA that would ensure JSA met the terms of the agreement with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and Sudhir took responsibility for the National Secretariat.

Although the details of the RTHC campaign were discussed in some detail in chapter 5, here it is worth repeating that the two key features of the campaign were the collaboration with NHRC and the set of *jan sunwais* (public hearings) in which 'the people' presented cases of denial of healthcare. Who was responsible for the shape of the Right to Health Care campaign? We might begin by noting that the NHRC had recently started working on issues relating to health, having set up a Core Advisory Group on health in 2000 for this purpose (ref), and that the shape of the RTHC campaign was significantly influenced by SATHI's and CEHAT's recognition of the opportunity this presented for JSA, and the decision to frame the campaign in terms that would persuade the NHRC to get involved. Kennedy (2004) points out that "[t]he human rights vocabulary makes us think of evil as a social machine, a theatre of roles, in which people are 'victims,' 'violators,' and 'bystanders'" (Kennedy 2004: 14). The NHRC works within this vocabulary; in order for it to intervene in a situation each of these ingredients must be present, and so their involvement in the Right to Healthcare Campaign depended on the creation of a format in which readily identifiable victims of 'denial of health care' and perpetrators could be brought forward onto the stage. The actors in this theatre, the people who actually *do* something, are the NHRC which demands a response from the state, the state which provides that response, and the JSA which arranges the encounter. Crucially though, the involvement of the JSA activists in the process is understood to be a technical intervention, insofar as they are outside the political decision-making processes of the state but attempting to influence those processes by non-political means;

"[t]hey *advise* the prince, they *interpret* or *apply* political decisions taken elsewhere, they *implement* the wisdom of 'best practice'" (Kennedy 2004: 115, emphasis in original).

The significance of this final point becomes visible if we turn our attention from what it takes to bring the NHRC on board to what it takes to bring the diverse membership of JSA on board. The brief introduction to Sudhir at the start of this section shows that the 'theatre of roles' involved in the RTHC differed significantly from the ideology that informed Sudhir's previous work with Kashtakari Sanghatna. Kashtakari Sanghatna looks to 'the people', rather than the state, as actors on the stage of history, and for them the role of middle-class activists who side with the masses is to assist the masses in building movements capable of overthrowing their oppressors. The RTHC campaign involved a shift from a politics focused on engagement with the oppressed to a politics focused on engagement with the state. Why this shift? Why choose to work with the NHRC at all if doing so requires this re-orientation? An answer can be found if we turn to the question of the diversity of JSA's membership. While many core members of JSA very obviously self-define as being 'of the left' and are enthusiastic about struggle-based politics, many others are not willing to involve their organisations and networks in struggle-based politics. For example, in a telephone interview, Rohit,[76] leader of the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI), explained that CMAI is happy to be involved in any JSA activity "where it is clear what the output will be and clear that the output will not be outside CMAI's remit;" in particular, field data collection activities are fine "so long as the data collected is not going to be used in an anti-government way, because CMAI's work often involves work with government" (Notes from interview). CMAI participated in collecting denial of healthcare cases for the RTHC campaign "because it was understood this was not anti-government" (Notes from interview). Thus the vocabulary of the campaign can be understood as an appeal not only to the NHRC, but also to those JSA members who would not get involved in a struggle-based politics.

This vocabulary did not appeal to all members of JSA, and it is useful to return our attention here to MAHILA (see chapter 5), who offered a particularly vigorous critique of what they saw as JSA's shift from 'health for all' to a rights-based approach to health. For MAHILA, this shift fragmented and de-politicised the perspective of JSA: "Meetings would become forums where 15 different people made 15 different presentations on different rights – right to mental health, right to child health, etc. – and at the end, what do you do with it? Everyone is talking about something different, carving out their own niche, and often because they were chasing funding allocated to a specific aspect of health such as mental health" (Notes from interview). According to MAHILA, the rights-based approach encouraged a focus on the health situations of small population categories, examining these in isolation from the politics of larger social structures which had been so central to the agenda of the health for all campaign in 2000. The issues and approach at the heart of the RTHC campaign narrowed the focus still further. "It's not even Right to Health," I was told, "it's *access* to healthcare – *very* narrow, focusing on doctors and dispensaries and drug availability, and there is a need for work on these issues but as part of a broader platform of issues" (Notes from interview). Structuring the campaign around the NHRC hearings meant that "the campaign became 'this one case in this one village, this one case in this other village', with no examination of the broader context; that one case is not all that is happening in that village" (Notes from interview).

[76] Name changed.

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Paradoxically, however, it is precisely the shifts in issues and approach highlighted by MAHILA's critique that made the RTHC campaign such a success in enrolling a wide range of actors. In the health for all campaign in 2000 the concept of health was intentionally left vague and amorphous, an 'empty signifier' (Laclau ref) enabling "everybody [to find] something in it for themselves" as Suresh of Delhi Science Forum put it, with the result that this concept could serve as "an entry point for a larger social mobilisation on social issues" (Interview transcript) – 'health' really was 'for all'. The RTHC campaign's very specific focus on *right* to health*care* enabled JSA to take a stance that was critical of the government but not anti-government; this stance made it possible to enrol the NHRC (as an authoritative, politically-neutral enforcer of rights) and those members of JSA members who would not risk being seen as anti-government. Crucially, the presence of the NHRC forced the government to respond to JSA in some manner – a key element of the equation that had been missing in 2000 and in every JSA activity in 2001 or 2002.

If it was this combination of elements that elicited the active participation of JSA members across the country (a level of participation in a JSA activity that had not been seen since the campaign in 2000), the *jan sunwai* format held a particular attraction because it offered 'something for everyone', and it is worth dwelling on why this was the case.

In chapter 5 we saw how individuals in the field of social action sometimes find that the performance of political representation can prove effective in capturing the attention of those they wish to influence. While the focus of that discussion was on how activists position themselves as spokespersons for groups within 'civil society' such as organisations, networks or campaigns, many NGO professionals also draw on their experiences 'in the field' in order to speak for 'the people'. As Redfield (2006) writes of MSF volunteers, their experiences in the field "constitute the perceived basis of discursive authority", their role "in representational terms is to 'be there' at the right time and place to transmute immediate experience or freshly received narrative into a potentially defining truth about suffering", their presence understood "not only as an expression of solidarity but also as a potential conduit to a wider circulatory network" (2006: 13). The anecdotes from the field that NGO professionals share with each other, with government officials or with the media are a form of testimony, a witnessing. But the purpose of such anecdotalism is not to draw attention to the particular individual whose plight is referred to, but instead to frame the speaker as someone who personally knows the conditions in which that individual's population – whether *adivasis*, dalits, slum dwellers, or construction workers – is living, and, on this basis, as someone who can speak for them with authority. In other words, what is sought from the presentation of experiences in the field is the authority to speak on behalf of a population.

For NGO professionals, the *jan sunwais* of the RTHC campaign *went one better* than offering them the opportunity to communicate their concerns to government officials on the basis of survey data or anecdotes from the field; instead, the field came and spoke for itself on the stage. As one senior staff member of a rights-based NGO put it, "this time what happened was [that] when civil society organisations presented their concerns about some of the policies, they had a solid reason in the form of testimonies, who have been denied right to healthcare, and those testimonies were horrifying" (Interview transcript). For this individual, what the *jan sunwai* format changed was the *means* of asserting the authority to represent, but the *purpose* of the assertion remained the same: to enable the JSA to speak for the population, not to enable the individual to speak for him or herself;

to demand policy change, not redress for the victim. That this is the case is suggested by a report of the regional hearing held in Raipur, which notes that during the proceedings "Those present decided to turn our focus from the individual cases to the structural causes as we thought that would be a better use of time" (ref). One of my informants referred to this use of testimonies as pornographic, and this term might be particularly apposite to describe a situation in which a victim is asked to describe what happened to him/her in graphic, 'horrifying' detail, for the gratification of observers.

While the public transcripts of the RTHC campaign laud [check] it as a great success, the hidden transcripts offered by JSA members who are not NCC members often expressed considerable disquiet about this aspect of the campaign, speaking of it openly and articulating accounts to me that were at once a form of reflexive self-critique, a critique of the leaders of JSA, and a critique of NGOs more broadly. "What is vital," Yashwant[77] said as we drove in his car,

> is that civil society organisations acknowledge and are aware and take account of the consequences of their actions. This is what didn't happen in the JSA's RTHC campaign. The civil society organisation comes in from outside, and says to the people, give us testimonies of denial of healthcare. So the people do, and they're the ones that lose out, while seeing hardly any of the benefits. See, after the public hearings, then there are backlashes from the local healthcare system. I know a case of a doctor hiring local *goondas* [thugs] to beat a man up because he gave a testimony. I know of cases where a doctor has simply refused to treat anyone from the village where a testimony came from. And even if the civil society organisations say to government, this backlash is happening, you need to stop it, what can the government do, they go to the doctor, they spend a day there, then they're gone and the doctor and villager are locked back in their relationship [*his hands circle each other in the air*] seeing each other on an everyday basis. So what there needs to be is that those who would give testimonies are informed of the probable consequences. But there's a problem with that because it can be difficult to properly get across what the consequences are. (Fieldnotes)

In this account the root of the problem is that both civil society organisations and the government are agencies 'from outside' the local site where the testimony comes from. This positioning marks a critical difference between the decision-making process of the NGO professional and that of the villager. In an article based on fieldwork around a Primary Health Centre in Thane district in Maharashtra, Vinay Kamat (1995) describes the dilemma faced by "a local tribal activist attending the health centre with his sick child" as "the double bind that confronts those who would like to initiate change"; as the activist put it pragmatically, "Poor people in this area, especially tribals like me are very often at the mercy of this doctor. The fact is that we need them more than they need us. So we have to tolerate" (1995: 94). In the narrative above, Yashwant's point is that the NGO professional does not face this double bind, and this makes his/her performance of political representation highly problematic since his/her decision-making process may not be informed by the pragmatism that informs that of the tribal activist. As John Harriss (2005b) puts it, NGO professionals' claims to be representative of the people for whom they are working "on the grounds that 'we work for them', or that 'we understand their problems'" are "understandable and usually sincerely made but refer to a very limited conception of representation" (Harriss 2005b: 6-7).

The foregoing discussion suggests that, with some caution, a distinction can be made between two types of performance of political representation: the performance by one who faces the double bind (such as Kamat's tribal activist), and the performance by one who does not (such as Yashwant's civil society organisation). We might note that this

[77] Name changed.

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distinction closely mirrors the distinction made at the end of chapter 4 between a Kashmiri stone-thrower and Arundhati Roy, and that the basis of the distinction is that these two actors are located differently. This distinction is an important element in the differentiation my informants make between *sanghatnas* (people's organisations) and NGOs. Discussing the membership of the JSA NCC, Lakshmanan explained

> by socio-economic status they're middle-class and their heart is pro-poor and we welcome that. But there is a difference between you and me saying "I work for the poor," and an organisation like my wife leads [his wife leads AIDWA], which is *of* the poor. The bulk of their membership is of poor people. That's not true of these organisations. […] Dr Sudhir's organisation, if I want to go and join and say can you add me as a member, they can't add me as a member. [BGVS differs insofar as] we can join as a member, […] In that sense it's a mass membership organisation […] [but BGVS] is still an organisation working for the good of all, it's still altruistic; which is slightly different from a people's organisation where [...] Your personal interest and the interest of the group are the same. I mean there are middle-class members who can become leaders of a movement like my wife does. Ok. But then her income would be Rs3000 per month. [JSA NCC members'] incomes would be Rs36000 per month. And this Rs3000 is made compatible with her organisation and that sort of people she is working with, 1 crore women, most of whom are poor women. And they're there because women's empowerment is their empowerment. But for me people's health is not my health. I've got other access to healthcare. And that is a very critical difference, and therefore these organisations [in the JSA NCC] are situated differently from trade unions and working-class associations, and women's and youth movements, [...] these are not mass organisations these are resource organisations. (Interview transcript)

What Yashwant's critique of the RTHC campaign misses is the fact that some of the organisations that participated in the collection of testimonies were *sanghatnas* rather than NGOs. Yashwant's analysis raises the question of why *sanghatnas* would participate in an activity that would put those giving testimonies at risk and would lead to no benefits for the community they work with other than the possibility of an incremental change in legislation that might never get implemented. One answer to this would be to note that for all of Yashwant's criticism of the 'upwards-orientation' of JSA's leaders, his analysis *also* remains fixated with the world of policy-making and legislation as the location of meaningful social change – whereas many *sanghatna* activists might be more inclined to focus their attention on more local social change. Kamlatai's account of the difference the RTHC campaign made to her encounters with local government representatives might be one example of this (see chapter 5); another might be a statement in the report of the Thane district RTHC *jan sunwai* managed by Shoshit Jan Andolan (a coalition of people's organisations), which notes that Brian Lobo of Kashtakari Sanghatna (a member of Shoshit Jan Andolan)

> Strongly objected to the statement by ADHO [Assistant District Health Officer] that the issues raised were not serious. It is improper to pass the entire buck for non-performance on to the higher authorities. While conceding that some matters needed to be handled at higher levels, many issues raised can be remedied at the local level by the District level officials, e.g. such as insulting behaviour towards patients, abdication of duty and callousness of medical officers and other staff, cleanliness in health centre premises and siphoning off of essential services and drugs. The officials have not stated as to what action they will take against erring medical staff. Suggested that a meeting with the Andolan representatives to be called by DHO to discuss all relevant issues raised. (ref to report)

These accounts suggest that if some *sanghatna* activists saw value in participating in the campaign, this may have been for completely different reasons as compared to the reasons NGO professionals saw value in participating in the campaign. While NGO professionals can add legitimacy to their performance of political representation by having a testimony-giving villager beside them on the stage, *sanghatna* activists can add authority to their performance by linking themselves with the NHRC and JSA in situations where doing so may be more productive than linking themselves with their

sanghatna and the credible threat of mass action it can bring to bear. While the regional hearing in Raipur can use the structure of the *jan sunwai* space to steer the focus of the discussion upwards to the level of policy, Brian Lobo can use that same structure to steer the focus of the discussion onto the practices of district-level officials and "erring medical staff". In this sense the RTHC campaign has 'something for everyone' insofar as actors who are situated differently to each other are able to get very different things out of it. This suggests that MAHILA and Yashwant's critiques of the campaign and its focus on rights are most productive when they are read as critiques of the way in which the spaces opened up by the campaign were used by some JSA members (NGOs in particular), rather than critiques of the campaign as a whole or the rights-based approach *per se*.

If we ask why different JSA members use the spaces of the campaign differently there are at least three possible answers we can offer. At one extreme we can locate agency in the individual and argue that it is particular individuals who are to blame. At the other extreme we can argue that this outcome could have been predicted at the outset because it is no more than the effect of social structures and the inherently problematic nature of human rights discourse. Latour's approach to agency offers a far more useful way of answering the question by emphasising that particular individuals could have chosen different courses of action but made their decisions under the influence of a large number of other agencies; rather than locating fault in human rights discourse *per se*, Latour's approach offers us a way of seeing that the problem Yashwant identifies has a tendency to occur when human rights discourse is embedded in particular institutional contexts.

The other problem with the RTHC campaign which came up in its hidden transcripts was the lack of 'follow-up'. One member of CEHAT's office staff told me that this was something that tended to happen with voluntary campaigns, for a number of "structural reasons". Most obviously, at the end of a voluntary campaign "nobody then has the time, you push all your other activities into the background to participate in something like the denial of healthcare public hearing and then you just want to resume those other pending activities" (Interview transcript). A second reason is the inter-group dynamics of voluntarism, where "you have to do it but you shouldn't claim any credit for it", which leads to a situation of 'damned if you do and damned if you don't'; "you don't want to appear as though you're doing it for the glamour or the attention, then at the same time you can also be held responsible for not doing things at capacity" (Interview transcript). A third reason is the nature of the event, the fact that the event is something concrete which you want to be part of, while the follow-up is more vague, open-ended, not time-bound; "this has been a typical thing of the *jan sunwais*," she said, "that beforehand there is a tempo, and then after it is over people just relax, and then start preparing for the next event, and then there is no tempo to the follow-up [...] we need to feel that something is going to happen" (Interview transcript).

There was, however, a crucial fourth reason for the lack of follow-up. The RTHC campaign had succeeded in putting JSA on the map as an activist network taking a position *vis-a-vis* the state as a health rights 'watchdog' and, through the yearly review meetings which the NHRC stipulated that government representatives must attend, initiated a new engagement between JSA and central and state health ministries. The legitimacy of this position, which identified JSA as 'critical of government but not anti-government', was thrown into question by the outcome of the national elections in May 2004.

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2. National Rural Health Mission

Writing about the events of May 1968 in France, de Certeau (1997) argues that because there is always going to be an imperfect fit between each individual's principles and the position adopted by any collective claiming to represent them, the acceptance of representation continues so long as we don't mind the differences, and ceases as soon as we come to mind the differences. Writing about the France of a decade earlier, Bailey argued that "Particular political structures live or die according to whether they can remain compatible with their cultural and natural environment, either by making themselves suitable to it or by modifying it to suit them" (1970: 10). Both these ideas are relevant to the story of the JSA's relationship with the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, which this section examines in order to understand JSA's relationship with government, the position in the politics of health they imagine themselves to have, and the position in the politics of health I believe they occupy.

Halfway through the Right to Health Care campaign, in May 2004, national elections replaced the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) central government with the Congress-led UPA (United Progressive Alliance) coalition. During the BJP-led central government, the leadership of JSA positioned themselves outside of and against the central government insofar as they argued that there were things the central government should be doing which they were not doing. This can be seen, for example, in the National Health Policy critique of 2002 and in the structural critiques and recommendations included in the reports of the Right to Healthcare Campaign public hearings. The role of JSA was clear at this time: a health rights watchdog positioned outside the government. Their position was clear because they were in agreement that not much more could be achieved in that political climate. Was everyone in JSA in agreement that critique of policy and campaigning were the best possible actions JSA could take in that political climate? No, probably not, but it was the consensus reached in JSA. As individuals and organisations, JSA members continued to take other actions. The Christian organisations probably continued to work with the government, as suggested by Aruldas in the quote from him I included in the previous section. People's organisations such as Kashtakari Sanghatna probably continued to take up specific local issues, as seen in the previous section. But within JSA there was a consensus on what JSA could do in the circumstances, given the coalition that JSA is, rather than what they thought individual and group members of JSA could do in the circumstances, given their positions. I am not claiming that there were no disagreements or differences in opinion on this question before the UPA, but what I will argue in the remaining sections of this chapter is that when UPA came these disagreements became more visible and pronounced. Those who were active in the JSA National Coordination Committee meetings and discussions that took place between these, were in agreement, were in accord. The arrival of the UPA broke this accord at the national level, principally because some believed that much more could and should be achieved with the UPA than with the NDA.

There were two main reasons some within JSA believed the UPA required a different response. Firstly because the UPA did not enjoy a simple majority on its own in the parliament and consequently relied on external support, principally from the 59 MPs of the Left Front. The UPA government's policies were initially guided by a common minimum programme[78] negotiated with the Left Front, and therefore perceived to be

[78] In India, a Common Minimum Programme is a document outlining the minimum objectives of a coalition government.

centre-left by many. JSA had initiated a pre-election dialogue with the 12 manifesto-writers of the 12 political parties, of whom 6 came [details]. Some of the points from the document circulated by JSA in this interaction went into the Common Minimum Programme, in particular the need to increase public spending on health with a focus on primary health care (GoI 2004: 7). Secondly because when the UPA came to power at the centre, they reached out to non-RSS civil society. Most famously, Sonia Gandhi set up the National Advisory Council to monitor implementation of the common minimum programme and populated it with activists and academics.

In health, two new things were going on. First, reaching out to civil society in new ways. Second, looking at health in new ways, with a greater receptivity towards the type of perspective on health endorsed by JSA. To some extent the first of these provided the space for the second to be taken forward. While the NDA had encouraged NGOs to work with the government as service providers, the UPA invited NGOs and activists to take up roles as advisors, trainers, and even to set up systems for monitoring healthcare provision. As an example, one of my JSA informants compared the earlier Reproductive and Child Health national programme with the UPA's National Rural Health Mission. While the former "evolved quietly as often these bureaucratic schemes do through internal dialogue of the government", for the NRHM the government

> set up 10 taskforces, for a year, and all of us [in the JSA leadership] were members, and when we went to those taskforces it was obvious there was a new openness to listening. Just to give you an example I was a member of the taskforce on Medical Education and Support Manpower, and I wrote the taskforce report, finally. Not just that I wrote but that I [as a civil society representative] was given the opportunity to minute the meetings and put up the final documents, which shows a certain confidence [...] an example we feel of the shift. (Interview transcript)

The JSA leaders were uniquely placed to take advantage of this move by UPA. There were doubtless a variety of reasons for UPA making this move, which it is beyond my scope to go into here (but see refs). What it is important to note here in my argument is that to some extent this was the UPA falling into line with the 'good governance' agenda of international development institutions, which calls for this (cite World Development Report, as Harriss cites it).[79] The leadership of JSA could take up the roles offered by the UPA government because of the way their organisations fit well into the definition of civil society dominant in policy circles – for the most part. Commenting on his exclusion from the government's Advisory Group on Community Action (see below), Lakshmanan implied that this was probably because AIPSN wasn't the right sort of 'civil society', saying "I think the government is trying to shape a coalition of organisations that is more amenable to its terms" (Interview transcript). Lower down the food chain the same differentiation was in evidence in a District Chief Executive Officer's reluctance to accept the eligibility of Kashtakari Sanghatna, registered as a trade union not an NGO, to participate in the first phase of the Community-based Monitoring of Health Services programme, a programme managed from top to bottom by civil society organisations (see below; see also Donegan forthcoming).

The UPA was not just looking at civil society in new ways, but also looking at health in new ways, with a greater receptivity towards the type of perspective on health endorsed by JSA, starting with the Common Minimum Programme as mentioned above. The 'stronger primary health care thing' of UPA probably had a variety of influences but the

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[79] McNeil and StClair (2008) argue that WDRs are super-important in trend-setting. Who is the audience? The audience is the finance ministry of the countries dependent on the World Bank. The target is not civil society, but civil society is affected by what the finance ministry decides to do.

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influence of civil society at various points may have been significant. In particular, the shift from the narrow emphasis on population stabilisation embodied in early drafts of the second phase of the Reproductive and Child Health programme (RCH-II) to the broader rights-based and gender-sensitive focus on social determinants of health and especially 'communitisation' that emerged in the NRHM may have had a lot to do with a meeting in October 2004 in which a large gathering of health activists (led by Vina Mazumdar) presented a letter of concern to the Joint Secretary. Having said this, another influence was an international meeting in which a group of countries and donor organizations told India to show progress in reducing IMR and MMR (Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5).

With the arrival of the UPA, the environment in which JSA was positioned had changed and the range of positions that JSA members could adopt had changed. The latter was partly due to changes that had come with the arrival of the UPA as noted above, but it was also partly due to changes in the relationship with government instigated by JSA members either as part of JSA or in their non-JSA work. For example, in Maharashtra the NHRC hearings had enabled a new interaction between JAA and the state government, which Dr Ameya described to me:

> [If you look at] our actual strength, just in terms of to mobilise and to make enough noise to embarrass the government [...] we don't have adequate strength to move things. But because of some standing, some kind of a respect that we command, and because of our earlier relationship with the NHRC, somehow this whole combination of factors the government of Maharashtra is now responding [...]

Apart from JSA, individuals within JSA were able to take on positions such as sitting on committees and taskforces because of the social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu *Distinction* REF) they had accumulated through their work. They were individuals whose work was publicly acclaimed and recognised in various ways.

Thus we can say that with the arrival of the UPA the environment in which JSA was positioned had changed and JSA was forced to decide how to respond to that change. Various positions emerged in discussions around the issue. The basic thing was how to view the UPA, and here there were two positions. Some in JSA, especially those who were sceptical of all mainstream political parties, dismissed the UPA as "more of the same" and the NRHM as "population policy repackaged" (coordinator of MAHILA, notes from interview). They argued that JSA must retain its watchdog position 'outside' government. Others, especially those who were supporters or members of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM), were more inclined to argue that the UPA and the NRHM represented a qualitatively different space of engagement for JSA. JSA must work with government to make the NRHM a success; if the NRHM was a failure this would strengthen the lobby for greater privatisation of healthcare provision. The conflict between these positions within JSA was resolved with the decision that JSA would retain its position as a critical voice 'outside' government, but at the same time individuals and organisations within JSA could work with the government as they saw fit but 'not as JSA'. As we will see below, this resolution was unstable and contested in and around meetings of the JSA National Coordination Committee during my fieldwork between 2007 and 2009.

In its watchdog role, JSA published *Action Alert on the National Rural Health Mission* and launched the People's Rural Health Watch. The former was a collaboratively written document with certain similarities to the 2002 critique of the National Health Policy document. The People's Rural Health Watch was a JSA activity between 2006 and 2008. It was more ambitious than earlier JSA surveys that had collected data in only one state

(see chapter 5), in envisaging the collection of data from 8 states. This data was to be synthesised at state-level and used by activists in advocacy with the state government, but it was also to be synthesised at national-level into a report. Coordination of the activity across the country and the writing of the national-level report were to be carried out by a Delhi-based Secretariat for the activity, comprising a junior academic at JNU and someone from CMAI to assist her. The academic was paid to do this, while all others involved in the activity did so as volunteers. The money for the academic's pay and some costs associated with state-level coordination meetings (travel costs plus hiring a venue) were covered by a grant from DTT? In concept and structure, the People's Rural Health Watch had many similarities with the Right to Healthcare Campaign. It also had a number of important differences. Three key ones were that: a) the People's Rural Health Watch involved a smaller number of states, b) it did not offer a space for interaction with the government via the NHRC, and so interactions with government must be organised by the activists, and c) it came at a time when the central government was rolling out the NRHM and inviting civil society participation to make it a success. These three points probably contributed to the way the People' Rural Health Watch activity developed. By the end, many in JSA were of the opinion that in almost all the states involved the data collection process was lacklustre, the data collected was mediocre, and no efforts had been made to use the data collection process or the data as a tool for mobilisation or advocacy. An important exception was Chhattisgarh, where the process was led by Lakshmanan and activists of strong organisations of the poor (in particular Binayak Sen and Sulakshana).

In their non-JSA activities, many members of JSA engaged with the UPA government in the same way they had engaged with the NDA government: the change of government made no difference. Some organisations were involved in partnerships with the government in service provision, for example the Mother NGO scheme (refs). Key among these were the VHA organisations like Prayas in Rajasthan and Karuna Trust in Karnataka. They described their position (or others described their position) as being that 'our priority is that services should be provided to the poor, and the question of whether it should be the public sector or private not-for-profit sector that provides the services is secondary to that'. Many others in JSA characterised precisely these kind of practices as "privatisation through the backdoor", as one informant put it "it may even be that some of the running down of the public health system relates to their alternative being seen as non-governmental organisations having a bigger role all over" (Interrview transcript). At the opposite extreme to such service-providing organisations were the radicals, led by organisations of the people such as AIDWA and NAPM, who "don't really think that this government is serious" and so take a position of "only building up people's protest so that there is a structural change [...] engagement is not with the understanding that you can force the government to change but that you can expose the government's non-changing" (Interview transcript).

Within JSA during the period of my fieldwork it often seemed that it was the middle ground between these two extremes that was most hotly contested within JSA, with individuals accusing each other (to their face or behind their backs) of selling-out or adopting false positions. Those who occupied this middle ground were the rights-based professional NGOs or the membership NGOs of the science movement, and were characterised by Lakshmanan as "organisations [...] that also believe ideologically similar to AIDWA but who believe that the engagement needs to be much more critical so you can generate an idea of what the alternatives are, that's very important and that

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can only be done by working with the [government]. But it's still a position that says that the government's own interest and ability in changing is limited" (Interview transcript).

While many coordinators of the service-providing organisations and the 'middle ground' organisations in JSA joined one or more of the NRHM taskforces or other committees set up by the government at state or national-level as advisory bodies on policy, their views on the value of taking up such positions varied, ranging from cautious optimism to scepticism to dismissal. In the context of the analysis and argument of this thesis it becomes apparent that the positions expressed in the following four quotes fit with how each speaker is positioned. The first is a rights-based NGO professional, the second and third are critical academics at JNU, the fourth is with the science movement, and all have worked as consultants for the NRHM.

> Everyone on the NRHM is not a JSA person. We are a much larger proportion than we had thought we would be, sometimes out of 10 consultants 5 or 6 of us are [from JSA], enough to tilt the balance in a session; [...] [and] you also dialogue with the others. It's a sort of evolving process. (Interview transcript)

> In one of the groups [...] they were [...] [arguing] that Primary Health Centres are useless and we need to scrap them. So I am glad I was there because we fought that [and won] [...] [so] I don't think that the engagement is totally futile. But I also feel that one shouldn't think that by being there you can really change the course of things. Because the way the Ministries are organised, [...] one individual is always played against another, and so there are three other committees who are saying something different. [...] Minor internal corrections can be made. But the larger disease of the conceptualisation of NRHM [...] cannot be changed, because it's a part of health sector reform. And the state is *pushing* the reform, they're not saying 'Ok let us stop and rethink.' (Interview transcript)

> I can see it's almost *impossible* to do any kind of influencing [...] I think a lot of people *are* under the illusion that they *are* influencing policy [...] but I'm not sure it's because of their power to influence policy as much as that they are within the current, and that current is NGOisation and public private partnerships and so on. Which is not something I feel very sympathetic to. (Interview transcript)

> The government- what it does with NGOs is just left as the matter of a few officers. It's some sideplay. The main play is what happens in Parliament [...] that's where, from the Minister to the Secretary, they really take it seriously and answer. So to an extent organisations that have got an ability to critique independently [are those that] have their own independent access. So AIDWA has got Brinda Karat to represent them in Parliament, [*laughs*], what the hell does it matter [if] we talk to Z [...] [Brinda] can talk to the Prime Minister any day of the week she wants, [and] they have at least 15 to 20 members of Parliament [...] on every Parliamentary committee and consultation before every bill on health Brinda is invited, she goes and presents to the Parliamentary Select Committee. So it's not as if her space is determined by the space we provide in this interaction. (Interview transcript)

While most of my informants seemed to agree that even if involvement in policy committees was not very productive it was not entirely futile, one of the more interesting disagreements within the middle ground of the JSA was over the difference between involvement in shaping the NRHM as policy and involvement in implementation of NRHM. A major focus of this debate was the Community-based Monitoring of Health Services programme.

Lakshmanan and Sudhir joined the NRHM taskforce on District Health Planning, and used this space to write a component into the *NRHM Implementation* 'blue book' (MOHFW 2006: 63-72) based on the idea of monitoring of health service provision by 'the community'. In late 2006 a framework for implementation of this community monitoring programme was drawn up by the Advisory Group on Community Action

(AGCA), a body of experts formed by the government to advise on the implementation of the communitisation aspects of NRHM. Sudhir was a member of the AGCA and led the process from this point onwards; Lakshmanan was not a member and had nothing more to do with the programme. The first phase of the programme was implemented in 35 districts in 9 states[80] in 2007 and 2008. The programme was implemented by civil society organisations chosen by the JSA-dominated AGCA; the majority were selected on the basis of their participation in the JSA's Right to Health Care campaign (see Table 2 below, which shows the organisations involved in CbM, PRHW and RTHC in each state). While most of the work in the RTHC campaign and the People's Rural Health Watch was carried out on a voluntary basis, the Community-based Monitoring of Health Services, as a government programme, involved substantial sums of money being transferred to the implementing organisations.

It is instructive to note the range of positions on the community monitoring programme within JSA. Against those who said that JSA should not jeopardise its position by getting involved in implementation of government programmes, Sudhir argued that the community monitoring programme did not involve JSA organisations implementing policy. Rather, the programme involved these organisations as *facilitators* of monitoring that was actually being carried out by the community. Further, Sudhir argued that the programme could be seen as a way to strengthen JSA. Within a meeting of the JSA National Coordination Committee in late 2007 he proposed the idea of Community Monitoring 'plus':

> We should not get involved in community monitoring as a stand alone project activity. If we limit our involvement in this process to forming committees and organising closed door committee meetings, we would fail to use the full potentialities that this process offers. Rather we should use this opportunity for widest possible community awareness building, mobilisation on health rights and dialogue with decision makers at various levels. (Shukla 2007: 3)

Having said this, Sudhir emphasised that he was distinguishing between the programme, that was not a JSA activity, and the 'plus' component, which *was* a JSA activity (Shukla 2007: 5).

However, some activists expressed reservations about these ideas. Krishna,[81] who worked for a health NGO and helped run a voluntary support organisation for *sanghatnas* in western India, said:

> The NGOs feel that doing this community monitoring is a big change [...] they feel that community monitoring is a big health movement in India, besides community monitoring there is no health movement in India. But that [...] [perspective] differs from [that of] people who are involved in totally grassroots campaigns [and] I personally differ from that. I feel *ki* no, [...] health movement was going on from last 20 years [and] [...] is not a new thing. This [community monitoring] is for those who want campaign *and* money.

Krishna argued that those involved in this government-funded programme were constrained in their ability to criticise the government:

> What you want to do, you are actually not able to do that. If you want [...] a public hearing with the government, you have to say 10% positive things about government. [...] it was very important to have a separate identity of JSA, [...] totally movement-based, you can talk, criticise the policies, have mobilisations, [and for that] [...] it has to be without funding also. But now it is difficult because lots of people have gone in funding, lots of the people's initiatives have gone down, and a few people [...] are totally sidelined. (Intervirw transcript)

The coordinator of MAHILA put it slightly differently, describing community monitoring as reacting rather than shaping policy, "presenting a list which says 'a is wrong in village b, c is wrong in PHC d', rather than saying 'the NRHM is shaped by

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[80] Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu.

[81] Name changed.

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international and national actors with an overriding interest in population control, and we should reject it on this basis'" (Notes from interview). Both Krishna and the coordinator of MAHILA rejected the idea that the 'plus' element of community monitoring plus could legitimise and exonerate [check] the community monitoring *programme*, which they saw as inherently flawed simply by virtue of being a government programme.

Meanwhile, a contingent led by Lakshmanan offered a third position:

> JSA itself is not willing to get into facilitation, it only wants monitoring and evaluation goals, now what the hell, there are far too many people monitoring and far too little people doing anything. Everybody's monitoring, hundreds of people monitoring, if a percentage of them start doing the [NRHM] programme then we'll at least create some islands [...] and positive feedback from that to the rest would save the programme. (Lakshmanan 10/11/07)

Lakshmanan's own position differed from many others in JSA and reflected the work he had been doing since 2000. Since 2000, Lakshmanan himself had become less involved in JSA, partly due to his shift from Tamil Nadu Science Forum to the Chhattisgarh State Health Resource Centre. This involved a change in the type of work he was doing, from developing public awareness campaigns that travelled through the villages in the form of 'kala jathas' (travelling street theatre productions), to trying to develop ways of strengthening the state healthcare system. This shift can be understood in terms of a shift from campaigns aimed at bringing some change within the behaviour and attitudes of the public, to work with the government aimed at bringing some change to how government provision of healthcare works. Notably, Lakshmanan contributed to the development of a new community health worker scheme in Chhattisgarh called the Mitanin Programme. When the UPA government came to power, Lakshmanan shifted from Chhattisgarh State Health Resource Centre to take the role of Executive Director of the National Health Systems Resource Centre as a quasi-governmental body within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with a similar remit at national-level to what the SHRC had at state-level. At the same time he was involved in 'scaling-up' the Mitanin programme to become the ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) programme, a nation-wide community health worker programme; he also remained Vice-President of AIPSN. Thus Lakshmanan's involvement in the NRHM went beyond the membership of advisory committees and monitoring programmes that most other JSA members limited themselves to. Lakshmanan saw himself as fully involved in trying to make NRHM a success. He took the position that the UPA in power provided an opportunity for JSA to negotiate into existence some of the things they wanted and prevent things they didn't want, and the JSA should make maximum use of that space to do so. For that reason, sitting on policy advisory committees was not really good enough, because even a massively improved policy would face the same issues in implementation, and creating systems of monitoring such as the People's Rural Health Watch or the community monitoring programme was at least potentially counter-productive when what these systems tended to produce were critiques of public healthcare provision with little indication of how to improve.

> My point is that you should use that space to articulate the position so some relief is done, some alternatives are built up, [...] expand the political debate and dialogue, make sure more issues are brought into play, otherwise deadlocks occur. [If],you say 'no, everybody, government is privatising everything' and other says 'no, public system is failing,' and you are talking at cross-purposes so at some point people say 'ok, they have to choose between privatisation and no privatisation' [...] an inefficient public system or privatisation, that's the way the option is given, which is a false option. [...] You get this? It's very important to understand that in the absence of a certain type of engagement you actually fall into the trap of this, of either being with privatisation or with an inefficient public sector where there is a no-change, status quo-ist position, you say 'everything that needs to be done has been done, all you need to do is increase the budget, and since that is not happening there is nothing

> more to be done', or 'get rid of corruption,' or 'people have to be more motivated', or 'doctors have to go to rural areas' and there's nothing more to be done, so it's a status quo-ist position, so you either articulate a status quo-ist position or you go for a privatisation position, you don't allow the space for third positions to evolve and I am all about third positions, I think that's the role of the JSA, to be able to critique these two positions and be able to create the space for a third position, where political dialogue will pick it up, it's not JSA that can make the change, it is the political process that can make the change, but JSA can expand the play of political forces, arguments, debates, issues. (Lakshmanan)

Absent from the JSA leadership 2001-4, Lakshmanan returned to the forefront of JSA to push this position with the arrival of UPA and NRHM. Instead of adopting Lakshmanan's position, many in JSA adopted the position of critiquing NRHM from outside with People's Rural Health Watch and the community monitoring programme. Government officers saw the community monitoring programme as an NGO programme, only accepted the notion of NGOs monitoring them because they received Government Orders telling them they must do so, and called the public hearings of the community monitoring programme (a device obviously borrowed from the Right to Healthcare Campaign) 'kangaroo courts'. As noted in chapter 4, the media covered the findings of the programme in a sensationalised way, particularly in Maharashtra and western MP where SATHI was managing the programme and had actively engaged the media in covering it. The media portrayed the public healthcare system as being in a state of collapse, prompting the government officer who was Secretary of the Taskforce on District Health Planning to blast Sudhir. Sudhir retorted that he could not control how the media presented the issues and that funds for engaging the media had been included in the programme budget – which had been accepted by the government. Meanwhile, the paid coordinator of the People's Rural Health Watch, an academic based in the Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi with no organisational affiliation, compiled the data collected into a report that was launched just as parties began to gear up for the next national election (which took place in 2009, and pushed the Left Front out of the UPA coalition – from the perspective of the AIPSN faction in JSA, thus closing the window of opportunity offered by the first UPA administration). The report was highly critical of the UPA government's efforts in healthcare provision. Lakshmanan condemned the report as counter-productive, its 'launch' event was low-profile, and afterwards it was more or less shelved.

3. Agencies

By way of summarising and completing the argument of this chapter, this section asks why individuals adopt the positions they adopt (i.e. the stance they take on particular courses of action and general questions of whether to work with or against the state), and begins to look at the question of what the consequences are of the positions they adopt. The answer I will give to the first of these questions is that individuals adopt positions because of how they are positioned vis-à-vis other actors.

To begin with we can note ideology, sets of ideas that find currency with particular groups of individuals. While those in the leadership of JSA share broadly similar ideologies, there remain important points of difference, such as how JSA should respond to the NRHM. But the ideologies with which particular individuals align themselves do not just pop into their heads from nowhere. The arrow of causality from a particular ideology to how an individual positions himself or herself is not straight, but is refracted, distorted by the relationships between the individual and other actors. To put this another way, ideology gets modified in the attempt to resolve the contradictions between how an

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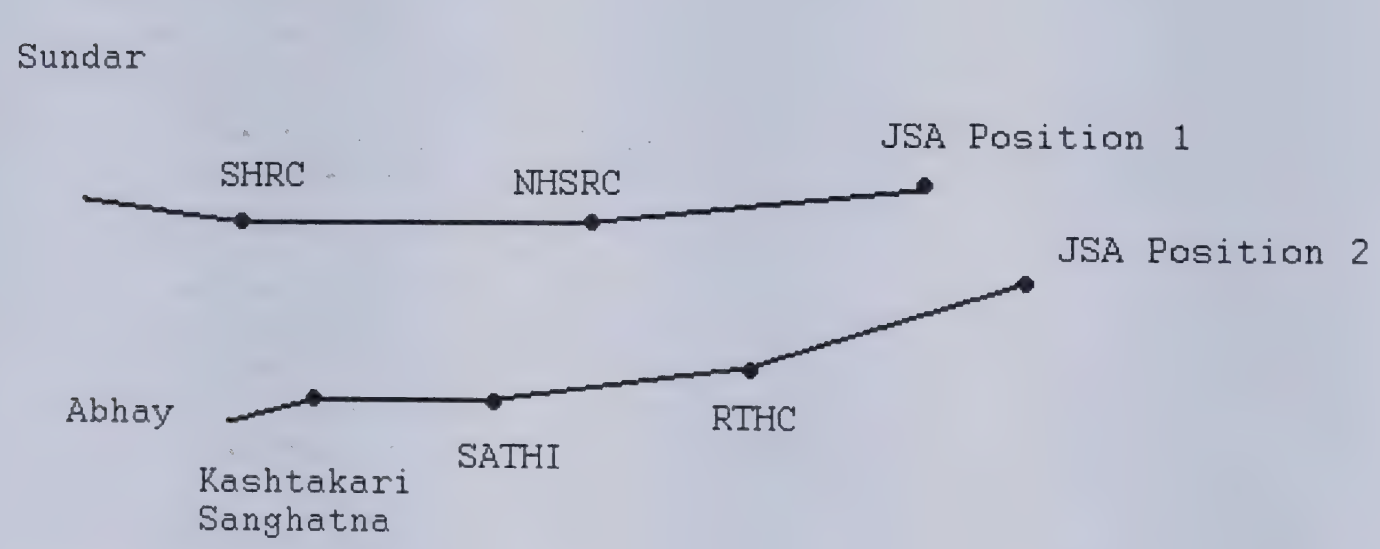
individual is positioned and how they want to be positioned. When I asked one JSA leader if individuals are members of JSA because they share broadly the same approach, she said that "Whether they actually practice it or not is not possible to determine [...] Ideologically they are saying the same thing, but whether they [take the same approach to] the contradictions [...] within our own practice or within our own organisations, that is not a subject of scrutiny" (Interview transcript).

Their careers positioned Sudhir and Lakshmanan in particular ways as individuals (fig. 1). Sudhir's early work with Kashtakari Sanghatna and the expansion of that work to a wider group of people's organisations had positioned him as having a certain expertise and symbolic capital associated with a particular model of building a health movement 'piggybacked' on the non-health work of people's organisations. With the support of SATHI-CEHAT, a small organisation of paid full-time NGO professionals, he developed a proposal for how JSA could take up this model with support from the National Human Rights Commission, the Right to Healthcare Campaign was launched, and Sudhir was propelled into the centre of the leadership of JSA. Encouraging JSA to adopt a confrontational approach to the UPA through the People's Rural Health Watch and community monitoring plus would maintain continuity with what JSA had previously done and the positions they had taken, but would also build on what he himself had previously done and thereby ensure he continued to be positioned in the centre of JSA.

Fig. 1



Lakshmanan had followed a very different trajectory. He was central to the process by which JSA came together in 2000, but while that mobilisation clearly identified JSA as a group who saw the state as the key actor in achieving 'health for all', it did not deal with the question of whether JSA should work with or against the government to get the state to do what it must. After 2000 Lakshmanan remained with AIPSN on a voluntary basis but neglected JSA, putting his energies into paid work with the government, first with the SHRC in Chhattisgarh and then with the NHSRC in Delhi. He was positioned inside the government and so more predisposed to support the UPA; in addition the government included the Communist Party CPM, with whom he was linked. Encouraging JSA to adopt a supporting role to the UPA would involve JSA moving away from the critical watchdog role they had started to build for themselves through the Right to Healthcare Campaign, but might have led JSA to take a role more complementary to how he was positioned so that JSA could contribute to his efforts to make the most of the window of

opportunity presented by the UPA. If JSA accepted this position, Lakshmanan would once more be positioned at the centre of JSA, possibly (although not necessarily) displacing Sudhir.

If these were the only sets of influences, the stage would have been set for a face-off within JSA; but in addition, Sudhir's organisation, SATHI, exercised a contradictory influence on Sudhir's position. SATHI and many of the other NGOs in JSA had people in their employ and needed to pay salaries, and several programmes of NRHM offered attractive opportunities for NGOs to take on implementation. To get the best of both worlds, Sudhir and others in the leadership of JSA tied themselves in a knot: as JSA we are not entering into implementation, but as organisations we will do so. In particular, SATHI and many others got involved in both the community monitoring programme and ASHA training. In effect, Sudhir (like so many others) took two positions at once, one position with regard to the paid work of his organisation, and another with regard to his organisational voluntarism.

Finally there are of course other sets of influences, less specific to the cases in question and more endemic to the field of social action in India. First, as I have argued in the History and Voluntarism chapters of this thesis (and hinted at again in the first section of this chapter), there is a peculiarly strong overlap between a certain dominant construction of brahmanical service (Caplan 1985: 151, 201; Mayer 1981) and a certain tendency to construct the human rights activist as outside the set of power relations s/he condemns (Kennedy) that lends moral weight to the case for remaining outside the 'dirty politics' of government (Harriss 2005a, 2005b). Second, as I have also argued in the History and Voluntarism chapters of this thesis, there is a not insignificant niche market for radical posturing among both domestic and international development funding agencies and benefactors of social movements. As Lakshmanan put it,

> there's a danger for civil society that there is too much stake and reward for failure of the government. A prophet of doom is likely to rise higher, much faster, much more international visibility [...] Like ASHA now. [...] Everyone wants to evaluate it, talk ill about it, say it's nonsense. If it turns out [well], everyone will say look, I was a member of ASHA mentoring group, I was so-and-so, I wrote that initial book. And they all did. But today they are all abandoning ship. Everyone is there to put one more knife into its heart and nobody is there to work to actually save the programme. [...] And it's like that. If I state my position that ASHA programme is a disaster, it's going to fail, then I have a 90% chance of being correct. And I don't have to do much. It's very relaxed, I'll possibly win the game, and I'll be seen as more radical, more correct, more professional. But if I take the risk now, and go after this programme, put together a force and turn it around, it's a whole lot of heavy work, and it's only got a 10% chance of success. It's really got so little chance of success, it's desperate. So what does one do? And the point is if you turn it around, then people say 'no no no, why are you claiming the thing now?' – that's the way the programme is. And that's the problem also of this radical posturing within the JSA because sometimes what happens is, some of the things you do are undramatic, are with the government. We've grown by things we've done with government, not so radical things, very minor things, surveys and things, but we always have to pretend that we are sort of leading the revolution, that divergence is very much part of the problem. If we settle with saying that '[this] is what we can do, we are middle-class guys, we strongly feel, this much we can do, the others have to take it from there,' then it's all right. But [it is not as dramatic and does not lead to visibility in the same way it would] if we [...] do this whole thing of 'put us in jail'.

Third, there is the elephant in the room: the ontological question of what JSA is and does, what it should be and should do. And there is no definitive agreement on the answer to this question, for two main reasons. The first reason was explored in chapter 5: the fact that it is by keeping it vague, refusing to commit JSA to one answer to this question, that JSA has managed to keep together as a coalition despite the presence within it of individuals and organisations with different positions, positioned differently to one

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another. We began to see the second reason in the first section of this chapter: the fact that JSA includes both NGOs and *sanghatnas*, and these two categories of organisations are positioned differently. While NGOs may have the capital (social, symbolic, cultural and economic) to take the position of expert advisors, programme implementers or resource persons with the government, they often lack the legitimacy and authority that *sanghatnas* have by virtue of being accountable to their constituency for any position they take. By refusing to commit JSA to one category or the other (see the discussion in chapter 5 of how JSA is performed differently by NGO professionals and *sanghatna* activists), JSA appears to get the best of both worlds, and can claim to belong to either category as the situation demands. But because this ontological question is left unsettled, both Sudhir and Lakshmanan can – and do – claim JSA for their own position: Sudhir claiming that JSA is comparable to a *sanghatna* and that working with the government would be co-option, Lakshmanan claiming that JSA this comparison does violence to *sanghatnas* and to 'the people':

> JSA does have some part of that [people's organisation] character, too. But they [the people's organisations] are not those who are setting the pace [...] JSA is a support organisation [...] It's pro-people, but whatever their glimpses it's not yet people's organisations. And I think there's an important role that these organisations should do that you should maximise, instead of making claims on what we are not. We are doing very useful work, I am happy with it, I just don't want to claim things we are not.

It seems likely that it was these three outside influences that had the most impact on the positions adopted by JSA members other than Sudhir and Lakshmanan. Ultimately Sudhir was more successful in enroling support for his position, but still he did not achieve what he had in mind for JSA. Those he recruited only paid lip-service to doing the work of the People's Rural Health Watch, and for the most part did community monitoring rather than community monitoring 'plus'. Further, these two activities did not manage to sync with each other in the way hoped for; there was no enthusiasm for doing so. Lakshmanan, on the other hand, only won over a very small number to his position; he told me "JSA is largely, and will remain, with Dr Sudhir".

Sudhir's relative success certainly wasn't all down to the persuasiveness of Sudhir; the positions adopted by others were influenced by how they themselves were positioned. Those in JSA who went along with Sudhir were positioned closer to him than to Lakshmanan. In addition, the fact that Sudhir became the key broker for the community monitoring programme meant that he was able to exercise a form of patronage, bringing JSA members into the programme and the funding that came with it, and thereby substantially modifying the power relation between him and others in JSA. At the same time, the engagement of most JSA member organisations with People's Rural Health Watch and community monitoring plus was half-hearted or absent, largely because of the 'structural reasons' identified at the end of the first section of this chapter: because of how they are positioned, these organisations do not have adequate incentives to do more. Likewise, Lakshmanan's relative failure was also not entirely his fault, but owed a lot to the incentives to take critical positions in civil society, and the risks attached to the position he was asking people to adopt. In these circumstances it was convenient for others to portray him as having been 'co-opted' by government, an accusation made all the more easy by Lakshmanan's links with the Communist Party (CPM), the concurrent situation in Nandigram, and the fact that at this time many rights-based NGOs tended to go with the Sanhati analysis of Nandigram rather than the CPM analysis (chapter 5).

Conclusion

> [I]t's only by keeping a larger-than-oneself idea of where one needs to be going and what one is up against that any campaign can really survive these very big, sometimes very major differences of opinion, also of behaviour, of organisational behaviour or perspective. (Jaya)

JSA survived the first UPA administration, it didn't break apart although there were moments when it looked like it might do so. The moments of doubt were partly because the question of 'what one is up against' was thrown into question. But it was also because of what immediately preceded this episode. The Right to Healthcare Campaign played a crucial role in endowing JSA with a certain inertia, making it more solid and less vague and amorphous. This made it slightly less flexible and less able to deal with fluidity with the reappearance of fundamental rifts and cracks in the coalition prompted by the arrival of the UPA. The rifts and cracks appeared because there was a new immediacy: the UPA calls for a response and the JSA must go in one direction or the other, support or confrontation.

It can be argued that JSA shaped NRHM to some extent. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the actual extent is difficult to ascertain given that – as one of my informants pointed out – the NRHM may have been going in that direction anyway and JSA were merely "within the current" (Interview transcript).

However, what is undoubtedly the case is that the NRHM has shaped JSA. The arrival of the UPA and NRHM presented itself to the JSA as an existential crisis, cutting to the core of what held the coalition together. The individuals and organisations of JSA devoted much resources, time and energy to debating with each other how to respond to NRHM, and then to getting involved in engaging with NRHM in different ways. I am certainly not suggesting this was wasted effort; it produced many positive outputs and positive unintended outcomes. But it came at a cost; as one activist put it "We've missed the bus on other policies and things happening at state and national levels because of the JSA's excessive focus on the NRHM" (Notes from interview).

It seemed to many as if the choice was between breaking the coalition of JSA and moving forward at a very slow pace. Many JSA leaders probably considered the former at some point, imagining taking one side or the other forward in their chosen direction as JSA and letting the other side break away in protest.[82] Ultimately this was not allowed to happen, and was avoided by the different factions backing away from the questions which would have broken the coalition if they had attempted to answer them definitively one way or the other. Instead, the answers to those questions were kept vague, not talked about – which was how the coalition had survived in the past.

This is a story common to many other contexts. Lewis gives an example from the Philippines (2008), there is a similar example from Brazil (REF).

What we additionally learn from the story of JSA's Right to Healthcare Campaign and JSA's encounter with NRHM is what happens when there is a rapid change in the environmental conditions under which a particular model of 'piggybacking' voluntarism is operating. The arrival of the UPA had a very different impact on those who were earning directly from social action compared to those who were not, sharpening the

[82] The NGOs throwing down the gauntlet vis-à-vis Nandigram could be interpreted as an attempt to do this; even if those who initiated it did not intend it as such, many of those who backed it probably did. Also the attempts to create two JSAs in MP can be interpreted in this way.

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contradictions in the practice of the first category far more as they engage in voluntary, campaign work on the one hand, while on the other earn their livelihood from very similar work for 'the poor', 'the marginalised', or some other category of people 'situated differently' somewhere else, not here. One way that the contradictions are dealt with, as seen in the story of JSA's encounter with NRHM, is in the division of the self into two identities, which might be labelled 'voluntary action' and 'paid work' or, as in this case, 'JSA activities' and 'non-JSA activities'.

Does it matter? Some within JSA say the contradictions and the division of the self inherent in 'piggybacking' voluntarism are an important ethical problem within the contemporary field of social action:

> [The problem is that these people who earn through social action] may take very radical positions which they would not then have taken if they were not so safe and secure in terms of their own ideals and space, if they really had to engage with ground-level realities or political realities. For example one of our friends and comrades is in prison, he's a paediatrician, Binayak [Sen], you know the story, and that's because he's sitting, not in Delhi but somewhere in Chhattisgarh and he's trying to do some human rights work and this is the cost of it, you go to prison, and so therefore many people [who are also in Chhattisgarh and] who might have supported him have chosen to not be so vociferous or so articulate [...] [out of concern] for themselves, for their families [because they do not want to also be sent] to prison, whereas somebody sitting in Delhi may well shout and scream from a position of relative security – in every way possible, physical security as well as economic security. So all positions that are being taken have to be seen in the context of *who* is it, and from *where* that is being said, and how they themselves live, and what their own experience of things is, only then would I really be able to evaluate the positions that an organisation is taking.

In the third section of this chapter I argued that the influences on an actor's decisions are multiple and complex, but that does not mean actors no longer have responsibility for their actions. Latour reminds us that actors are only actors if they could have chosen differently, and I believe that the controversies within JSA show that at an infinite number of points there was the possibility of choosing differently, and the probability that a different choice would have seemed to make sense if the options were understood differently. As a 'common minimum programme' of voluntary action, actors who face incentives to jump from one issue or event to the next without adequate 'follow-up' – or, for that matter, without "doing their homework" beforehand (Notes from interview) – could find ways to commit to doing 'a bit more'. But as much as such commitments, what is required is recognition on the part of such actors that they are not outside politics in the way they might imagine themselves to be. Their actions have real consequences for real people, and they need to take responsibility for those actions. You must not imagine you sit outside power and speak truth to it. You do not. And that is ok – get involved in power, do things, do action not just research (chapter 4), make interventions. But admit to yourself that you are doing it, and that there is responsibility and ethics involved. And take responsibility, which necessarily involves thinking through what you are doing, but also means taking decisions on the basis of the pragmatic rules of power rather than merely the normative rules of your own morality, and attempting to understand that the decisions of others are made on the basis of the pragmatic rules of the system they are in.

7. Conclusion: A game of Scrabble

> The only way to increase a project's reality is to compromise...The good Scrabble player is not the one who uses permutations to get terrific words on his rack, but the one who succeeds in making good placements on the board, even if the words are shorter and less impressive. A few letters in a strategic position can bring more points than a fully spelled-out "Aramis" that you can't place anywhere and that forces you to give up your turn so you can keep it intact while you wait for a better configuration on the board. Besides, skipping your turn won't solve anything, since as the game progresses your chances of placing your word without any alterations or deletions may decrease instead of increase. Competitors proliferate. The board gets saturated. A wrenching moment for the engineer, as for the player entranced by his fine word: "Aramis" has to be *abandoned* for another combination, or worse still, has to be tossed back into the pool or at the risk of drawing "zyhqhv"! It's this moral crisis that leads the pure Aramis – the first Aramis, the one that could do everything – to be called nominal, while the series of altered and compromised Aramises is referred to as the *simplified* Aramis, or the *degraded* Aramis, or the *VS* (for *very simplified*) Aramis. If the player is reluctant to compromise his construction, he has lost...there are as many possible Aramises as there are possible compromises among all those – humans and nonhumans – who have made themselves necessary to its gradual realisation. The only impossible solution is an Aramis that would accept no compromises; that would suspend the work of recruiting, of generating interest, of translating; that would expect the Orly Aramis to come into being all by itself, on its own power, from the feasible prototype to the real transportation system, as if the words in a Scrabble game jumped all by themselves from the rack to the board... (Latour 1996: 99-102)

The conclusion my analysis leads me to can be summarised in one sentence: in the field of social action, all players compromise or lose, and although considerable benefits can be gained by claiming to have made fewer compromises than your competitors, the mechanisms by which players make these claims can cause considerable problems when a sudden change occurs in their immediate environment.

To develop my argument I have set up three categories of actor within the field of social action: a tripartite division of activist organisations into *sanghatnas/jan sangathans* (Marathi/Hindi: people's organisations, people's movements), rights-based NGOs, and the left political parties the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and their front organisations. I use these three categories because they are the primary framework used by my informants in JSA to make sense of the differences between themselves. In the historical analysis in chapter 2 I suggest that the ideological bases for the divisions between these three categories have emerged in the Indian field of social action largely in response to shifts in the political field since the 1970s, although the roots of these divisions can be traced much further back into the pre-Independence era. Having said this, the particular form of the 'rights-based NGO' is a much more recent phenomenon, so that we can say that these three categories have really only existed in their current form since the 1990s.

My core argument in the thesis is that we should not fall into the trap of taking these categories and the divisions between them at face value, but should examine how they are produced and maintained, and for whom they are productive. In chapter 3 the theoretical approaches introduced in chapter 1 are brought to bear on the health for all campaign in 2000, demonstrating how an analysis that 'feeds off' (Latour ref) the controversies between actors can facilitate our understanding of the questions of political representation posed by their collaboration, the diversity of the actors the collective brings together, and the ways actors use narratives not only to position themselves as key players but also to maintain their self-image as principled activists despite their association with activists they consider to be unprincipled.

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Chapter 4 focuses on one of the three categories, the rights-based NGOs, and explores how they articulate the differences between them and the other two categories, describing the concept of parasitic voluntarism which enables them to defend themselves against their critics and position themselves as morally superior to all actors except the *sanghatna* activists who occupy the highest point in the NGO professional's hierarchy of virtue. Parasitic voluntarism as a practice can be understood in the terms of Mauss's (ref) analysis of the gift as involving a range of reciprocal relationships, the moral obligation of which stems from the fact that they are not recognised as reciprocal. The concept of parasitic voluntarism involves the NGO professional dividing him/herself in two, so that the individual has a non-radical professional (paid) identity and a radical activist (voluntary) identity. The principled virtuousness of the latter compensates for the pragmatic compromise entailed by the former, but there is a tension between the imperatives imposed by these two identities which becomes more apparent in chapters 5 and 6.

Shifting the emphasis from the ideal of voluntarism to its practices, with a focus on how these practices shape JSA, chapter 5 introduces the trade-off between purity and effectiveness that Latour captures in the quote with which the Conclusion of this thesis began. Between 2001 and 2002 JAA, the Maharashtra state chapter of JSA, remained 'true' to its ideal of voluntarism but had a limited impact and was, for the most part, a voice of criticism the state could ignore. From 2003 to 2004 JSA became visible to the state through its collaboration with NHRC, but this came at the cost of institutionalisation and the introduction of a hierarchy in which some JSA members were seen to benefit disproportionately. In Maharashtra, JAA came to be dominated by a rights-based NGO, SATHI, as BGVS withdrew, a change that was in part a reflection of the different compromises imposed on their practices of voluntarism by their different organisational structures. By comparing narratives of these changes we come to understand how the performance of an identity or the naming of a group is a political act, an intervention in a set of power relations marked by a greater or lesser degree of struggle; we also come to see that there is more scope for contestation, for struggle, where institutionalisation is less. We might say that in such situations the 'capture of speech' (de Certeau 1997) is more possible because the relationships of power are more unstable and less 'congealed' (Foucault ref); at the same time we may note that there is less at stake in a struggle over such terrain.

Chapter 6 brings the foregoing analysis to bear on JSA's relationships with other actors with a focus on the existential crisis JSA was going through during the period of my fieldwork (2007-9). Drawing on Latour's approach to action and agency allows the analysis to capture the ways in which action is messy, ambiguous and contingent, and how different actors, positioned differently, face different exigencies of practice and different constraints on their decision-making, many of which were introduced and analysed in chapters 2-5. The rupture that occurs when the UPA central government replaces the NDA throws into relief all the compromises made by the non-party left rights-based NGOs *and* the left party front organisations (that is, the science movement) and demonstrates exactly how both parasitic voluntarism and the broad coalition brought together in JSA worked well under certain 'environmental conditions' but no longer do.

Among the revisions I still need to make to the thesis one stands out, which is that at present my analysis lends itself to an interpretation in which the *sanghatnas* get off 'scot-free', without having made a compromise. In fact they have made a compromise, and the

consequences of this come through most clearly in chapter 4. The compromise they make is that by accepting money from the NGO professional they tie themselves into a reciprocal relationship with the NGO professionals who they cannot trust to take decisions responsibly and who can, and do, sometimes take decisions that could cause problems for the *sanghatna*. The NGO professionals cannot be trusted because, as argued in chapter 6, they do not face the 'double bind' faced by the *sanghatna* activist when they take decisions, but take decisions 'as if' they were *sanghatna* activists themselves; in this way they adopt 'false positions', and it is these false positions that can harm the *sanghatna* activist. By agreeing to work with the NGO professional (ultimately, for money), the *sanghatna* activist places him/herself in that position of danger.

That's all I have at present, but in a couple of weeks the conclusion will look much better than this.

THE END

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Appendix

Research Proposal submitted for the purposes of obtaining a research visa.

Researcher

Brendan Donegan: PhD student in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, UK

Title of Research Project

Legalising Public Action and Public Health: The People's Health Movement and the Right to Health Care Campaign in India

Research Questions

My research investigates the Right to Health Care campaign organised by the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (People's Health Movement India) in 2003-4 to answer the question: what contribution to democratic governance does public action by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) make? Fieldwork will take the form of an ethnographic study of understandings of and practices around health in Mumbai. Data-collection will be oriented around the following groups of questions:

1. How do different social groups – the urban poor, health NGO workers, local representatives of the state, the private health sector and the media – understand and represent health issues? How do they act upon their understandings? How have their understandings, representations and actions changed in light of the JSA's campaign?
2. How do the urban poor strategise when deciding which health-seeking practices to adopt? What are the outcomes of these practices? What do they make of the JSA and its campaign? How has the JSA's campaign changed the setting within which the urban poor strategise, or the outcomes of their practices?
3. How do health NGOs strategise when deciding what action towards social change to adopt? How do they work together in the JSA? How do different NGOs understand and represent their involvement in the campaign? What are their reflections on and explanations for the outcomes of the campaign? How do they see the future of the JSA? What do their donors make of the JSA and its campaign?
4. How do local representatives of the Indian state translate health policy and programmes from 'above' (that is, from the Indian government and from international organisations such as the World Bank) in their practices on the ground? How do they respond to the health-related actions of the urban poor and health NGOs? What do they make of the JSA and its campaign? To what extent were they involved and/or in favour of it? How do they see the involvement of NGOs in the health sector changing in the future?
5. How do individuals working in the private health sector respond to the health-related actions of the urban poor and health NGOs? What do they make of the JSA and its campaign? To what extent were they involved and/or in favour of it? How do they see the involvement of NGOs in the health sector changing in the future?
6. How do individuals and firms involved in the production of media representations understand health issues? How do they understand the JSA, the role of the media in relation to campaigns such as that of the JSA, and the constraints on how (and if) health issues and campaigns get represented in the media?

In recent years, governments, international institutions and academic research institutions have come to appreciate the important contribution to democratic governance that public action by civil society organisations can make, and there has been a concurrent increase

in demand for research to understand the process and implications of such public action. Consequently my research will contribute to both the important ongoing debate around these issues in both academia and policy-making circles, and the knowledge urgently required if healthcare delivery is to be improved.

Topic

The term 'civil society' refers to the sphere of not-for-profit and non-party social action. The past two decades have seen a massive increase in the number of civil society organisations operating across the world and major changes in the scope of their activities (Edwards and Hulme 1992; Eade 2000). India has a particularly vibrant civil society (Behar and Prakash 2004). Across the country there are many thousands of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social movements, activists and advocates working to achieve positive social change at all levels and in a variety of ways.

In India, the number and visibility of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) cases increased dramatically from the mid-1980s, and has been celebrated as an important aspect of India's democracy (Prakash 1984; Baxi 1994). It has been argued that this growth triggered a subsequent interest by civil society organisations in imitating, approximating or adopting legal processes to the extent that Goetz and Jenkins identify a 'legalisation' of public action (2001: 368) and a 'new accountability agenda' (Goetz and Jenkins 2005: 15; see also Robinson 2006). In recent years there have been a variety of major initiatives that reflect this trend, including campaigns for the right to food, the right to work, the right to information and the right to health care.

My PhD research is based on a case study of the last of these, the Right to Health Care campaign organised by the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (People's Health Movement India) in conjunction with the National Human Rights Commission since 2003. It uses this campaign as a case study to contribute to understandings of the legalisation of public action as one way in which civil society participation in democratic governance has developed and evolved in India in recent years. The central elements of this campaign were a set of Regional Public Hearings on Health and Human Rights in five regions of the country followed by a National Public Hearing in New Delhi in 2004. These public hearings did not take place in a court of law, but sought to imitate legal procedures. This emphasis, in combination with the campaign's focus on a 'right' to health care, suggests the campaign fits well in Goetz and Jenkins' category of 'legalised' public action. On this basis my research seeks to understand how such legalised public action contributes to democratic governance.

Research Design

Data will be collected in an ethnographic study of understandings of and practices around health in relation to the JSA's Right to Health Care campaign, in Mumbai. In my fieldwork I will utilise a range of research methods: participant observation, interviewing, surveys, archival research. I anticipate that the majority of my data will be collected from informants from within five social groups: health NGOs, the urban poor, the private health sector, the state, and the media.

I place a central emphasis on participant observation as a research method on the basis of my conviction that in-depth ethnographic studies of civil society, democratic governance and the local impact of processes of globalisation are required if social science is to usefully make sense of such phenomena. While this is not a new argument (see Marcus and Fischer 1986), it has only recently become more widely acknowledged (Burawoy *et*

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al. 2000; Tsing 2000; Mosse 2005b). My participant observation will be limited to the Indian city of Mumbai. Within this context I will live and work within the NGO community that exists there. According to the information provided on the JSA's website (http://phm-india.org/), the key organisations steering the coalition are based in Bangalore, Mumbai and Delhi. I chose Mumbai on the basis of my existing contacts with NGOs working in the health sector there, that I established in a previous visit to India in summer 2005.

I will begin my fieldwork doing voluntary work with these organisations, a 'participant-as-observer' (Gold 1958). This seems a practical starting point for three reasons. First, the nature of these organisations and the high proportion of volunteers in their workforce would make a more detached and passive role difficult to sustain and potentially counter-productive because it might indicate a "lack of commitment and hence [lead to a] loss of credibility" (Bryman 2001: 301). I anticipate that the insights into the practices of these organisations that I gather through this will provide a direction for the rest of my fieldwork. Second, I anticipate that in the course of this work I will come into contact with four other groups of informants: the urban poor, local representatives of the Indian state, the private health sector and the media. My participant observation of these groups will for the most part be limited to settings in which they interact with health NGOs, such as health clinics and health surveys organised by NGOs, and the public hearings of the JSA.

In addition to participant observation I will use other data collection methods to gain a deeper understanding of the lifeworlds and social practices of my informants, to understand 'what they know *in the way they know it*' (Spradley 1979: 34). I will draw on interviews and participatory methods to seek answers to the questions listed in the research questions section. Although I will have a basic grasp of Hindi and Marathi by the time I come to do my fieldwork as a result of language training in the UK and in Pune (see itinerary), I anticipate employing a research assistant/interpreter for at least some of my work in the slums. I do not anticipate that I will require an interpreter when working with the informants from health NGOs, the private health sector, the state or the media, as their *lingua franca* is English.

When gathering data among informants from the private health sector, the state and the media I will initially draw on in-depth interviews with key informants as this seems the most practicable way of accessing the nuances and subtleties of their understandings and relationships with civil society working in the area of health, and other informants. These interviews may be based around interview schedules or oral histories, or be more unstructured than either of these. An advantage of the first option is that schedules help to ensure that the topics the researcher wants to cover get covered; an advantage of the latter two is that topics the researcher would not have thought to discuss may get brought up and open up new avenues for exploration as a result. Which style of interview is adopted will depend on the context, as "[t]here is no single interview style that fits every occasion or all respondents" (Converse and Schuman 1974: 53). Wherever possible I will seek to engage other informants, to try to avoid an undue reliance on the key informants and "seeing social reality only through their eyes" (Bryman 2001: 298).

Surveys may be used among any or all of my groups of informants. While these are unlikely to draw out the nuances and subtleties of my informants' understandings and relationships with civil society working in the area of health in the way that participant observation and in-depth interviewing will, they have the advantage of being more

readily accepted as a legitimate mode of social science data collection by busy professionals and communities of the urban poor used to such exercises. In addition they represent a useful way of 'getting myself (and my research) known' among my informants early on and improving my language skills.

I will also investigate state and civil society archives in Mumbai and New Delhi, for two reasons. First, I will seek to get a firm grasp on the history of health policy in the country and my field site, and present my findings in a thesis chapter on this history. My aim will be to see how understandings and representations of 'health' and 'civil society' as concepts have changed, how the two came to be linked by the Indian state and international agencies. Second, I will explore how both the Indian state and civil society organisations represent themselves and their activities "collectively to themselves and to others" (Atkinson and Coffey 2001: 254).

Why me?

The role of civil society organisations in development in the Indian sub-continent has been the focus of the majority of the research I have undertaken in my scholarly career so far and my PhD project is a natural progression from this long-standing interest. In 2003 I undertook a four-week research project as a volunteer researcher with Learning for Life International, a London-based NGO, into the feasibility of a new primary education project in Balochistan, Pakistan. In 2004 I was awarded £800 for an 8-week library-based research project into the relationship between the European Union and the Indian sub-continent as part of the University of Warwick Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme. In a visit to Maharashtra in 2005 I made a large number of contacts relevant to my PhD fieldwork and gained a lot of experience about everyday life in Mumbai; these will enable me to hit the ground running when I come to undertake the fieldwork for my PhD.

Research Justification

The outline of the topic given above points to two social groups for whom my research will be valuable: the national and international policy-making community and the NGOs, social movements, activists and advocates of civil society, both in India and in other countries. Within these groups my findings may be of use for judging the efficacy of certain governance strategies and understanding why such strategies have the sometimes unexpected effects that they do. In addition my research will extend the body of empirical material available for further scholarly and policy-related research on health issues and civil society in India and more broadly in the developing world.

I envisage three primary groups of stakeholders for my research: the Indian state, other social actors engaged in public health and development in India including Indian and transnational civil society actors, and bilateral and international development organisations such as the UK Department for International Development, the World Bank and the World Health Organisation. I envisage the dissemination of my research primarily through the publication of papers in academic and policy journals and edited volumes, the presentation of papers at academic and policy-related conferences to academics, policy-makers and civil society actors, and the publication of articles in newspapers and magazines. I anticipate my topic being of sufficient interest to university students, and my publications to be of sufficient quality, that my work will be of value as a resource for teaching. In addition, copies of any quantitative data produced will be offered for deposit at the UK Data Archive.

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Statement of Ethics

I will carry out this research in the spirit of the ethical guidelines set out by the Association of Social Anthropologists[83]. While not claiming to be exhaustive by any means, this section will set out some of the ethical issues particularly likely to arise in the course of fieldwork, and how I intend to tackle them.

How will my informants benefit from my study, and how will I protect them? As I have suggested above, I anticipate doing some work for the civil society organisations that are the primary focus of my research, perhaps in the form of quantitative research or literature reviews on specific topics of interest to them, at their suggestion. At this stage I don't have a good idea of what my poor, slum-dwelling informants might like me to do for them, but I anticipate that they will probably suggest some possibilities to me during our interactions. I have set aside funds in my budget for this purpose. In relation to both of these groups of informants I will try to anticipate the possible repercussions of my research on them and take this into account when deciding what aspects to focus on in my fieldwork and the published outputs of my research. Similarly I will endeavour to communicate to my informants the aims and objectives of my research and its possible consequences so that they can make an informed decision about their involvement or otherwise. In light of current ideas about collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2005), I will invite my informants to review my interpretations of data gathered from and with them and will consider any revisions they suggest. I will use pseudonyms to hide the identity of my informants where this seems appropriate as a means to protect their privacy. In some cases I imagine it might not be deemed either necessary or appropriate by my informants, for example when working with well-known spokespeople of the JSA or public officials.

At the same time I have certain obligations to my funders, the ESRC, and to the community of social researchers more broadly. My obligations to both groups mainly relate to the dissemination of my work. In the latter, I will strive to ensure the findings of my research are made available to other social researchers working within India and/or on issues of public health and governance. I discuss in more detail how I anticipate the dissemination of my work in the section on research justification above.

The ethical issue that is perhaps most likely to arise given my research interests is the question of what to do if people within slum communities come to me for help with a sick person. I don't have a medical background, but it seems likely that people may have expectations of knowledge about sickness and treatment. If people come to me for medicine I will explain I am not a doctor and that my knowledge of medicine is minimal. I will give out medicines I would take myself under the same circumstances, but point out that people would be well advised to consult a medical practitioner. I will support people in what they want to do to help themselves to the extent of my abilities and knowledge.

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ITINERARY

The timetable for the completion of the PhD is as follows:

September 2006-June 2007	Literature review Research Skills Training Language Training Apply for Research Visa Arrange affiliation with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai Arrange primary fieldwork site
July 2007-December 2007	Language training in Pune
January 2008-December 2008	Fieldwork in Mumbai
June 2008	Visit New Delhi for archival research
January 2009-December 2009	Dissertation writing in UK
January 2010	Expected completion PhD

As this timetable shows, the period for which the research visa is required is January-December 2008. I will also be in India from the period July-December 2007, doing language training in Pune with a friend, Neeti Badwe (email correspondence with Neeti Badwe is attached to this research visa application). I will be travelling on a tourist visa during this visit. At the end of this visit I will return to England to collect my research visa, and will then fly back to Mumbai to conduct my research.

My activities during the period covered by the research visa are described in the section of my research proposal (attached) titled 'Research Design'. During my time in Mumbai I will rent an apartment in Bandra or Santa Cruz. I will fly to New Delhi in June to consult a number of archives relevant to my topic. During my time in New Delhi I will stay in a hotel or with friends who live there.

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